

The
Mechanic

by *ALLAN MCIVOR*

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THE MECHANIC

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BY ALLAN McIVOR

Author of "The Overlord"



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WILLIAM RITCHIE
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THE MECHANIC

CHAPTER I

MR. DOOBAY LEAVES A TRAIL OF BLOOD

MRS. WORTH, looking up from her needlework with a bright smile, exclaimed:

"He is fond of us both, and I verily believe he is the kindest person that breathes."

The smile on David's face deepened at this statement, for he knew his twin brother — knew that other side of him which could be as hard as the iron he fashioned in his shop. But David was certain that his brother would never allow this frail little woman to see the side which men feared.

Peter and David Worth were born in New York and, at the age of sixteen, had begun to work in their father's shop. As their father and grandfather had both been mechanics, Peter and David were proud of the calling that seemed so firmly associated with their family. Their skill was well known. If a fine bit of model-making was to be done, it was always taken to Worths'.

When their father died they continued the business and, presently, securing a contract to build a slot-machine in numbers, they built a factory near Newark, still retaining the New York headquarters. But Peter and David, though twins, were not alike in coloring, form,

or mental equipment. Peter was tall, very finely proportioned, with dark eyes and hair. David was blonde, not quite six feet in height, but very broad and powerful.

One night, at a dance, they both met and fell in love with Rennie Terrwhitt, the daughter of a minister whose life was devoted to the uplifting of the floating wrecks of the East side. Six months afterward she and Peter Worth were married.

David had said to his brother, "Give me a year, Peter, to get over it, and there's my hand. I am not so good a mate for blue eyes as you, and I have an idea, based on many nights of wakefulness, that she doesn't know of my love. She sees no one but you, and — well, luck to you both. I told her to-night, when she asked me why I was so sad, that the awful harbor wreck had carried off a little girl I was fond of, and she cried for me. Peter, you are a fortunate devil to get that girl."

"That is so, David, and I will help along the wreck story, as, of course, we want to see you in Jersey."

But it was only after a child was born, which was called John after his grandfather, that David paid the wedded pair other than a flying visit to the Jersey home. Occasionally he would go over to the shop, but not often. When John was able to prattle, David spent his week-ends with his brother and sister, and he grew to love the little boy as though he were his own. It was time, too, that love should come to David, for his life on the East side where he was a favorite, was neither temperate nor moral, but his nature was curiously direct and he had never met any one who could drive Rennie from his heart.

In the Jersey shop, Peter, also, made fine steel for dynamos and other work that required the best grade of metal. David sent to the larger shop all the big contracts

he was able to secure and, notwithstanding the fact that Peter earned the more money, both shops belonged in equal shares to the brothers, and the marriage did not bring about a change in their relation as brothers and bosom friends. During the long evenings before his marriage Peter had read law, and it was to this that David attributed his brother's grasp of affairs.

When Pittsburg Steel made a proposition to Peter to join its ranks, he refused, and when its magnates threatened, he smiled. The Steel people did not wish to annex his small shop, but they wanted the man who knew how to make the kind of steel that had heretofore come only from England and Germany. There was also another reason for their desire to attach Peter Worth to their large establishment; they had heard that he could make steel in a simple way, direct from the iron stone. And as this rumor reached them anew from time to time, they became more eager to secure Worth, who would not move from his small shop and would not sell it or any part thereof. For a while they thought of taking strong measures to close the shop, but something in Peter's iron face prevented them, and David, who had very little education, felt that it was Peter's knowledge of the law that made him so formidable. The fact that Peter was his twin brother always kept him from thinking that Peter possessed brains of a different quality. He was not in the least envious as to his own status in the business. On the contrary, he was proud of Peter and boasted of his skill to friends in Center Street.

"Yes, he threw the Pittsburg Steel people down hard, and when it comes to making a man take a large tumble, my brother is very much on the spot. I tell you, fellows, it's his education. He used to read law and science o'

nights whilst I read the lights in pretty eyes. I had my fun and now he is having his. I can make models all right, but I can't do the other contracting stunts. I say again, it's education. If I had read law there would be two of us. See!"

Nobody smiled when he said this, because David could grow cross, and it was the opinion of the East side, to a man, that his strength could not be matched in the city. His acquaintances also knew that he was not quarrelsome in the least, yet he delighted in a trial of strength man to man.

On Saturdays David always carried some little gift for John. Once he heard of a litter of thoroughbred bull pups and he presented one of these to the boy, and the dog became John's most valued possession. They had terrible fights, but in the main, Mr. Doobey, the dog, and John were friendly; at any rate they were hardly ever separated. Mr. Doobey would walk with John to school every morning. At noon he was always there to accompany his master home. At first John's mother was a bit afraid that the dog would bite her boy, but the dog never even broke skin on John's legs or arms. This was apparently odd, because when Mr. Doobey and John fought, which was very often, they would attack each other with great fierceness, but their rows were all a part of a game they played every day. Sometimes John and Mr. Doobey would have a dispute on the way to school, and then perhaps they would not speak to each other for the rest of the day; but no matter how much friendly relations were strained, Mr. Doobey was always on hand when John left school. If the day were fine, they generally walked home.

First there was a river to cross, and then they passed

through a small settlement of foreigners who worked at all kinds of jobs. After this squalid piece they were in open country with the factory in sight, though it disappeared when they came to the crossroads, from which a short climb through a field brought them home. The foreign settlement was an object of suspicion, on account of a number of highway robberies which had been committed in its vicinity.

When Uncle David heard of this lawlessness he patted Mr. Doobey on the head and said, "If they ever molest John, old chap, my money is on you." That very day John's mother had said to David, "Peter and Mr. Doobey are the two best natured people in the world." It will be seen by this statement that Mrs. Worth considered Mr. Doobey human, and so he was in point of intelligence.

In rainy weather, John was taken to school in a covered runabout, accompanied by Mr. Doobey, of course. Neither Mr. Doobey nor John liked driving to school, even though Jolly Roger, their horse, was a fine one, for they missed the little foreign children to whom John always stopped to speak. He called the bewhiskered men of the foreign settlement goblins, and they, too, amused him. Some boys would have given this street of shabby houses and rough characters a wide berth, but neither Mr. Doobey nor John had learned the meaning of fear.

Every Saturday Peter Worth, on his way from the bank, either walked or drove through this section, and though several of the foreigners knew that he had in his pockets a large amount of money to pay his workmen, they did not molest him, though they hungered to do so. It was neither affection, nor the fact that he was a neighbor, that kept their hands out of his pockets. It was rather a force they could feel but not see. It was

the same indefinable something that had prevented the Steel folks from declaring war on Peter when he finally refused to have any connection with them.

The bandits sensed this unseen power, and though they went four or five times to the crossroads to intercept Peter, each time, after looking at their revolvers, they had decided not to attempt to rob him that day; yet, after Peter had passed along his road and was lost to view, taking with him that unknown quality which makes man fear man, they realized that they had been afraid. Still they had not failed at other times; they had raised their revolvers and their victim had responded promptly and easily. But they all felt that with Peter they would have to go a great deal farther than the cocked gun, and when they thought of what might lie beyond their command of "hands up," they shivered.

Returning from school one day, John was stopped by one of the goblins, who said to him with a laugh, "I'll fight you." Indeed the foreigner squared up as if to fight and, moving his hand quickly, he tapped John on the cheek. It was not the intention of the goblin to do anything more than play, and he did not know that John never fought outside of his home, and then only with very particular friends such as Daddie, Uncle David, or Mr. Doobey. For reasons of his own he wished to be acquainted with John and he took this way of accomplishing it. But the interview, if such we may call it, was terminated suddenly by Mr. Doobey, for, with a low, tense growl, he sprang at the foreigner, who very quickly jumped a low fence in front of his house. When he was safe from the dog, he pulled from his clothes an ugly looking knife, but Mr. Doobey could not follow through the board fence, and was consequently safe from the knife.

John, in the meantime, was looking at Mr. Doobey with a surprised stare on his face, as he had never seen his friend vexed before.

Turning to the goblin, John said, "Gee! he very near eat you all up."

The foreigner, now over his fright, answered with an ugly leer on his face, "He is wicked, but this" — patting his knife — "will take care of him."

Thereupon John continued his way home, and when he passed beyond the land of the goblins, he said to Mr. Doobey, "You shockingly jealous person, but me forgive you if you don't say anything to Daddums about that long knife — Gee whiz, Mr. Doobey, but Daddy sure would get cross if he knew that!" And the dog looked up at his master, whom he loved beyond all things, and said with a look, "I won't tell."

Surely, he must have said something like that, because John patted his head and exclaimed, "That's right; now me tell you tory, Mr. Doobey, so that you'll understand why me not want Daddie to know anythings. Listening?" John looked and saw Mr. Doobey wag his short tail, a signal that he was all attention. So the boy went on in his peculiar kind of baby talk to the gratification of Mr. Doobey, who expressed his approval of the narrative by sharp barks and joyful skips about his master.

By this time John and Mr. Doobey had arrived at the field where they saw Jolly Roger who came running toward them. They then formed a procession and, going zig-zag, made for home, John singing "Clementine." When John stopped and held his body rigid, the horse would push him on.

David, who saw this game for the first time that day, was amazed. Said he to his brother, "How on earth

does he do it?" And Peter replied with a laugh, "I can't tell you; but if you can define magnetism you'll arrive at John's power. He is a wonderful little fellow and as happy as the day is long. You see, David, we belong to a very old family. We can trace it back to the very earliest days of master builders on the Clyde, and, as you know, our family has been in Manhattan for more than two hundred years. On the other hand, Rennie belongs to an ancient race of gentlefolk. Two great extremes, then, meet in John; perhaps that is what we see and can't define. But coming to the boy's attainments, he takes figures at a glance; it is not possible to stick him on single fractions, though he is only eight. Here is a match-safe he made for me. At any rate he inherits the family calling — wouldn't it bother you to do a better job than this? Now, this little thing is only one of many of his inventions. As you know, he has his own anvil in the shop and he amazes the men there. They call him the little genius. The baby language you hear occasionally is a perennial delight to me, and is only used at home. In school he speaks precise English. David, I am going to see my boy educated for all the word education means; first in the public schools and then in law and science at Columbia."

Later that night, when Peter and John were alone, David said, "I think Rennie is getting stronger; she looks much better and has more color."

"Do you think so?" Peter replied with delight.

"I certainly do. How well she played and sang this evening. I tell you, Peter, she's had an education if you like. Say, Peter, how are you getting along with the steel process?"

"By next Saturday I may be able to tell you something

definite. You see I have a process now, but I want to be sure that it is basic—fundamental, else the other fellows might get ahead of me."

And Peter knowing that David was not up on the subject, added: "Every steel mill possesses its own way of making steel, but all their ways take about three weeks from the time the pig-iron is delivered. By means of my process I can do the same work in one day and of course at very much smaller cost. Now, this is important. I can make steel without the use of coke as fuel. This means that iron and steel eventually will be made at the iron stone mines. You see what a saving this will be in transportation alone. Hodges is very anxious for us to join his father's company before the trust is formed. He is clever and, I hear, unscrupulous. He would like to get my process so that he could ask a big price for his company if the trust were formed. It would be a great thing for him to say, 'I have a new process for making steel at one melting,' and then in his inventory add a few millions for this item. But I am also alive to the trust movement, and I purpose getting in it, too. We haven't much of a shop; it is not worth taking in as such, but the trust people will be glad to incorporate us if we have a good process. Well, David, I see a few millions ahead for both of us, especially if I can get a patent, as I think I can."

About that time two others in Newark were talking about Peter Worth's process. These two were Thomas Hodges and a mechanic who worked in Worth's shop.

Hodges said, "You haven't been able to get into his foundry?"

"I have tried, but failed. I make excuses to talk to Worth in his office, but when I am admitted, the foundry door is closed. As I have stated, it is only possible to get

into his foundry in the daytime or when the shop is open. That part has no windows and its roof is covered by steel beams too close together to permit of an entry. I'm sorry that I have failed" — and the spy looked at Hodges, who was smoking, and added, "I hope you don't blame me."

Hodges walked up and down the small room with a baffled look on his face. He had tried to buy out Worth, but was unsuccessful, and then he made one of his best men apply for a job with the hope of stealing Worth's scheme, and here again was failure.

Finally he said, "I must have that process, Bill, by fair means or foul. It's the biggest thing I ever heard of, and it would make me master of the whole situation so far as steel goes. Can't you think of a plan to get me into that damned foundry for three minutes? That is all I ask. Just one look at the crucible that turns iron into steel."

Then, becoming excited, Tom Hodges exclaimed, "By God — I must have his scheme."

The spy answered, "Will you make my check twenty-five thousand dollars if I succeed in getting you inside?"

"I will," Hodges cried quickly. "What is your plan?"

"Listen!"

Hodges sat down.

"Worth has a little boy called John of whom he is very fond, with more than the usual affection of a father for a son. Label that in your mind and remember it. Between Worth's property and the bridge there lives a gang of foreigners, and I happen to know that four of them are engaged in highway robbery, and, moreover, I am acquainted with the leader of this band. But let us go back to the boy. He walks through the settlement

every day about half-past three, and from the other side of the main road he stops and waves his handkerchief. This is a signal to his father who, in turn, waves from his office window. Then the boy walks down a slight incline to the road where he cannot be seen, passes up from the road to the level of his father's property, and usually comes to the shop. Now, here is my plan. Hire the foreigners to grab the boy after he gets his father's signal, and carry him to the road and hold him there for two minutes. And if you will be close to the factory when the foreigners seize little John, you will gain at least fifteen minutes in the foundry, as, of course, when Peter Worth sees his boy roughly handled, he will jump through the window and start to his aid. That's as sure as we both live, and may God have pity on the foreigners, for Worth won't."

Hodges thought the scheme over for a moment and said, "It looks simple. But will the foreigners do it?"

"Yes; for a thousand plunks they would carry the boy off for as long a time as you like."

"Why wouldn't that be a better plan?" cried Hodges. "It would give me more time. But what about the other mechanics in the shop?"

"I don't see how they will know, because their light comes from another direction, so they won't see anything, even if Worth should walk through the door. And don't forget that his office has a separate entrance from the road."

"How soon could you see the leader of these foreigners?"

"As it's early, I could see them to-night and arrange the scheme for to-morrow."

Capable Tom Hodges said, "Go ahead; here is a thou-

sand. Give them five hundred dollars if they agree, and another five hundred dollars payable on success. I leave it all to you."

These worthies then took a drink, Hodges saying, "I hope it will work, but what sort of a fellow is David Worth? I met him once or twice, but never heard him talk."

"Oh, he's a clever modeler, but not so good, I hear, at figures. His brother makes all their estimates."

On his return from school, Monday, John met his goblin and three others at the crossroads and was invited to go for a drive. He courteously declined, saying that he saw his father waving to him from the factory. As he made an effort to pass the men, one of them seized him and slapped a sponge to his nostrils. When he was quieted they lifted him into a closed wagon. Had John been conscious he would have heard screams and curses, for, when Mr. Doobey saw what was being done, he gripped the leg of one of the bandits and sank his teeth into the live bone. At last, in desperation, the dog's throat was cut with a knife, and the frightened kidnappers hurriedly departed with the boy. The bandits merely wanted to get the thousand dollars, and in order to secure this amount they purposed to take him well into the country, but near enough to civilization so that by telephone they could arrange for his return. It would have been much better in every way if this scheme had been carried out as planned, but unfortunately John's father had received a telephone message from the Ampere Electrical works asking him to come over that afternoon on urgent business, and, as the distance was six miles, Worth thought he would drive. Just as he was waiting for his son, he saw the foreigners seize him. Quickly

taking a rifle from the wall, he jumped into the run-about and drove at a run to the place where he had last seen John.

Then it was that Hodges, full of suppressed excitement, seeing Worth fall into his trap, hurried to the office, but just as he was about to swing open the iron door which led to the foundry, David Worth entered the room and cried, "Hold there!"

Hodges turned guiltily, and with a few quick strides David was beside him, saying, "What business have you in there? Going to steal what you can't buy, eh?"

Hodges replied, "I am looking for your brother, and as he isn't here, I suppose he is in there," pointing to the iron door. "Now that I have explained, it gives me pleasure to tell you to — to go to hell."

To Hodges that was the approved way of handling men of David's class, and, besides, he was very wrathful at his detection and failure. He looked toward the office door once or twice to see if any one were going to follow David in, and then, as he was sure they were alone, he thought he saw another chance of viewing the fittings of the mysterious laboratory. But if Hodges had only taken a walk on the East side of Manhattan in quest of information about David, he would not, perhaps, have spoken so roughly to him. Hodges, however, had not as yet passed much time in New York. He had been brought up in Pittsburg in his father's steel mill, and there he had adopted his way of handling working men and others, and this way was that of a bully. He was very large and strong, and possessed neither pity nor morals; success came to him so easily that perhaps it is not strange that he was vain. At any rate he held himself in very high esteem, and his happiest thought, when he was

thinking of himself, was of his great physical strength. As he gave expression to this thought very often and his friends repeated it, he was known as "Strong Tom" in Pittsburg and the oil regions.

Hodges therefore prepared himself to thrash David, not knowing that he was making physical war on the strongest man on the East side, and one of the cleverest boxers that ever wore gloves. But he discovered these facts about David in a few moments, and then lost all knowledge of things until he regained consciousness in a wagon which was taking him to a hospital. If David had only known then of what he afterwards felt to be more than a coincidence, Hodges would never have left the shop alive. After David had beaten Hodges, he locked the iron door, wondering what had caused his brother to drive away from the shop at so furious a rate.

He would have wondered more if he had seen his brother's look of surprise when he reached the main road, for Peter Worth fully expected to see his son and the foreigners there. Peter did not know that they had been supplied with a pair of fast horses and were at that moment half a mile away. In his agony he called out, "John, John!" but no answer came. Then he found John's little glove on the road and, seeing a clot of earth held together by some wet substance, he sprang out of the buggy, put his finger in the clot and wiped it on his sleeve. What he saw made him reel.

In a hoarse whisper, he gasped "Blood!"

As he walked up the road a short distance, the clots became more frequent and pronounced.

Peter sprang into his buggy and followed the drops on the road. His horse, a roadster, was going at a pace which he could hold for an hour. When Peter bought

Roger, as he was then called, the dealer had told him that the horse could do twenty miles in an hour, and now the animal was straining at his best. His driver, though blinded with rage and growing fear, knew how important it was to nurse him for a long race. He had covered about twelve miles when, upon coming to a hilltop, he noticed, about a mile ahead, a pair of horses that were being urged on. Then Peter called on his own horse and soon he was within hailing distance. Noting the way in which the horses were being pressed, Worth felt sure that his boy was before him, so he shouted for the party to halt. As if in answer, something struck him in the chest. At first he felt as if a brick had hit him, but he soon realized that it was a bullet. He felt no pain, and only a slight weakness followed. Raising his rifle he shot one of the horses as they rounded a bend of the road, and then three men jumped out of the closed wagon and began using their revolvers.

Jolly Roger, beloved of little John, fell to the ground, shot through the heart. Peter fired three shots and then ran to the wagon, where he found John white and still. When he first looked at his son he thought he saw death. The remaining robber fell upon his knees and begged for his life. Peter turned at the sound of the fellow's voice and beheld a cowering brute who was pointing at his leg, where Mr. Doobey's head was still clinging to its hold. The robbers had tried to loosen the dog's grip but this was impossible; the teeth were too firmly planted in the bone.

Peter leveled his rifle at the kneeling figure, begging for life, and sent a bullet crashing through his head. He then looked for the robber's companions, his rifle ready, but his aim had been true. One of them lay still,

and the others were running for life. Then lifting the boy in his arms, he detected the odor of chloroform. Carrying John to a stream near by, he sprinkled water on his face and soon saw a faint sign of returning life. With this relief, the mighty hold that Peter had on his own life began to fail. John presently became conscious, and looking up at his father said, "Daddie, why you look so white and why don't 'oo smile at me?" But before the sentence was finished, Peter's determined soul had gone to its God.

Presently a farmer, coming along, found John in tears, trying to make his father hear him. Later the wagon, with its dead, reached Worth's house. The mother was at the door and saw the stark figure of her husband. Running to the body, she fell over it — dead.

The next morning there were no foreigners by the bridge.

CHAPTER II

DAVID TRIES BUSINESS

DAVID tried to run the business of making fine steel and for a year succeeded fairly well. One day he had a call from a representative of the Pittsburg Steel people, who renewed their offer of one hundred thousand dollars for the plant; but David refused, firm in the belief that he could continue to run the factory and foundry at a profit. Hodges, through his spy Bill Sharp, discovered that the pile of iron stone had not diminished any since the death of Peter Worth. Of course he did not value at one hundred thousand dollars the small plant without the process that could at one melting convert iron stone into steel.

For a time he was convinced that David must know the process, but he finally heard through his man that the papers relating to the process were either lost or so hidden that they could not be found. His informant was speaking the truth when he told him that David Worth had dug up every inch of ground in the factory and had searched in every likely place, but had not found what he sought. David had talked openly with one or two of the mechanics of the shop as to the steel process, and it was quite certain that he knew nothing whatever of his brother's method of converting iron ore into steel.

When Tom Hodges heard this he called on his father, the president of the company, and asked for authority to close the Worth shop.

"Those papers must be there," he said, "and I want to conduct a thorough and systematic search. I have found out that Peter Worth was never seen going to his house with papers of any kind. I have also learned that his wife was so delicate that he made a point of never talking business to her. I am positive that the drawings exist, for of course he didn't find this process in a night and he must have made innumerable chemical tests, and, after the tests, he had to make drawings for machinery. The Worth factory is divided into two parts within the four outer walls; that is, inside there is a walled enclosure of brick without windows. He used electric light to work by and the only way to get into this second shop is through the office of the factory. Our man, and he is a nailer, has even succeeded in securing a look at this second shop. It is well guarded by its one heavy iron door, and when this is open the office door is closed and bolted.

"Of course, you see the importance of getting these works. If we secure only a faint suggestion to work on from the residue in the pots I can do the rest. It will be the greatest find of this century. I need not tell you what it means, other than my opinion that if we secure this process it is worth more than our original stock."

After delivering this opinion, Tom Hodges, who, though only twenty-four, was already a noted steel chemist and one of the growing powers in steel, looked at the president awaiting his reply. It was not long in coming, as father and son had talked before about Worth and his process.

The father answered, "I'll leave it all to you; get the process. Have I said enough?"

The son with a smile exclaimed, "Yes!" and walked out. Young Hodges presently went to England and Germany

and returned with a number of workmen who could make the kind of steel that David turned out. Then he cut prices in two, and shortly David was without orders to fill. His largest customer, the Ampere Electric Construction Company, sent for David, and its manager, Cary, said to him, "We have dealt with your brother ever since he started and the directors request me to inform you that they would continue to deal with you but for the pressure that has been brought to bear upon them. In other words, they think it is only fair to give you a hint that the Steel people are after your scalp and they think it will be useless to fight them any longer. Of course, this is in confidence. At any rate they told us that if we placed another order with you that there would be trouble. Personally I should like a war, but unfortunately it's not my money that's in jeopardy."

David, who clearly saw the trend of affairs, replied, "Thanks for your advice, Mr. Cary. I have an idea that you are right and I'll close up. Do you know of any firm that would like to buy our plant? It is a beauty, as perhaps you may know."

Cary smilingly said, "I see you don't know young Hodges or the Steel people; they will take mighty good care that their war on you will leave them masters of your foundry and factory. To be plain, they will convey a hint to intending purchasers to get busy with other affairs."

"Again I thank you," said David, as he walked out. When he arrived at the works he called his men into the office and announced, "I close Saturday, boys. I am down and out."

When this was done he went to the bank and notified the officers that he could not meet his overdrafts as the

Steel people would not allow him to continue business. He stated that the land and factory were worth ten times what he owed them, so they need not worry about what was due, but that it was his wish to get as much as he could for the property on account of his brother's child.

The cashier answered, "We shall have to sell all at public auction. I hope the property will realize enough to give little John a nice balance; at any rate he has our sympathy. How much do you owe now, Worth? I am not aiming at anything but a desire to help the boy."

"I owe you twelve thousand and another three thousand more in small accounts. If I can get fifteen thousand dollars for the shop I shall be clear of the world." Then David added, "I hope you will hurry the auction as I am anxious to get back to New York."

Hodges was pleased with his work and yet he would have preferred a longer fight so as to tie David up with a greater debt than fifteen thousand dollars. Hodges got this amount from the bank, which already had sent out a notice of sale. Many machinists went to see the Worth shop with an idea of purchase, but all these were told that the property was desired by the Steel people, and of course they returned to their own shops wondering why the Steel people hated Worth.

In the meantime David was altering his place, a three story building in Center Street, for John. His shop occupied all of the ground story; the next floor was divided into two rooms, one of which he used as an office and the other he slept in. The top story had never been used except as a storeroom. He had this large room renovated and made into a sitting-room, bedroom, and bathroom. He then hired a young woman as cook and housemaid and turned his old room into a kitchen. All of these

changes were accomplished with hardly any outlay, as David was very popular and had asked his brother mechanics to do this work at night or when they were not busy.

On the morning of the sale, David, not daring to look at John because of the tears in his eyes, said, "We are going to New York this afternoon, my boy, so take a last look 'round for anything overlooked."

"Thanks, Uncle David, but I have everything packed."

The auctioneer soon called for bids, and the cashier of the Passaic Banking and Trust Company bid eighteen thousand dollars. This made Hodges' representative angry and he spoke to the cashier, who answered, "If you want this property, bid twenty thousand dollars and it's yours, or else it belongs to us. You are not now dealing with a poor mechanic."

The representatives, knowing that this man's bank was backed by one of the largest insurance companies of America, made no response, but, turning to the auctioneer, said, "Twenty thousand," and the property was immediately knocked down to the Steel Company.

David grasped the cashier's hand and in a hoarse voice said, "Thanks."

"No thanks at all," replied the cashier; "the five thousand dollars is for John's education."

After the sale David said to John, "I think everything is now over, and we will go to New York and start a peaceful life." For the first time in nearly two years David's walk was buoyant. He had essayed business and had failed dismally; now he was on his way to the shop where, as a model-maker, he was a success.

When Tom Hodges arrived in Newark the morning after the sale, and saw a burnt foundry with only the

walls standing, his first impulse was to begin an action against David Worth. But the president of the company said, "We don't want his story told in court, supplemented by the testimony of witnesses. That's not our way, and anyway David Worth is now too small potatoes for us to bother with." So Hodges had to suppress his rage and this took considerable time, for his mirror showed that the punishment he had received from David had converted him into a coarse-looking brute with a flat face full of seams and scars. The object that he saw in the glass hurt him more than the loss of the process which he had hoped to steal.

In Pittsburg and the oil regions he found that his name of "Strong Tom" was a thing of the past, and he ground his teeth in rage at the man who had marked him for life. But he was clever and a person who reasoned, so he dropped the personal brute force side and sought money and power. He never once thought of the man he had killed on the hill road by his hired bandits, nor did he dwell on the death of Rennie, the murdered man's wife. He completely forgot the little boy who was to be nursed and reared listening to the refrain, "Hodges fixed that deal by which your father lost his life."

CHAPTER III

KING, THE GREAT WALL STREET MANIPULATOR

JOHN was charmed with his new home in Center Street, and when he said to his uncle, "I feel better here; not so lonesome," David was delighted. The following day David took his little charge to the public school and introduced him to the principal. His school associations promised to be both pleasant and beneficial.

Then David interviewed his housekeeper, Mary Radley, and directed that John should be given plenty of milk, oatmeal, and eggs for breakfast, and a hearty dinner of meat and vegetables at noon. At four o'clock he was to have some milk, bread, butter, and jam; then more milk and bread before being put to bed. He laid special stress on the boy having a daily bath, and warned her that he was likely to become disagreeable if John were ever slighted.

Mary Radley protested that she would take the best of care of the little fellow, and offered to aid him with his lessons as well. She also expressed her gratitude at having such work, as her family was in great need of what she earned.

David descended to his shop and went to work, his heart at rest for the first time in many months. David Worth was not much of a man in Jersey, but here on his own soil he was what he felt himself to be, a man who asked no odds of any one. Many dropped in to see him and invited him to drink. David's answer hardly ever

varied: "Can't now, am a family man, and the boy needs my all. I'm going to educate him in law and science." Upon seeing their disappointment, David, who wanted to keep his hold over his late associates, would add, "Come 'round about seven and see Peter's son — he's a great boy. I'll set 'em up then, but not for long, as he goes to bed at eight, and, boys, just count me out in the drinking end hereafter. I've quit."

At three o'clock on John's first day at school, David left the shop so as to bring him home, for he well knew that East side New York was not like Jersey, and that until John accustomed himself to new conditions he would have a rough time of it. David posted himself in a corner bakery and waited until school was out.

The boys in John's class had noted the stranger with rosy cheeks and a general suggestion of the country, so they made up their minds to have some sport. Little Willie Radley, a brother of David's housekeeper, who was the leader of this class, took charge of the fun; he had been told by his mother to help John all he could, and Willie, with twinkling eyes, had promised. Then the little imp began to devise ways of making it lively for the "farmer," so when school was over David saw John surrounded by curious and mischievous youngsters. At first a quantity of East side English was discharged at him, but John, who was an even-tempered little chap, only smiled at the names he was called. What David saw later made him laugh with huge glee. This was a battle-royal between John and Willie, which ended in the latter's signal discomfiture. What particularly tickled David, however, was the ceremonious solemnity with which the combatants, when all was over, shook hands and helped each other on with their coats.

When he came home he found John upstairs getting ready to study his lessons, and he was pleased that his nephew made no mention of the trouble. The following morning John started for school without any apparent worry, and David said to himself, "Like his father — he is not afraid of anything."

When John passed out of his street, he was met by Willie Radley, who, broadly smiling, said, "Come quick, I want to show you to my father. When I told him that you licked me he was mighty pleased; now he wants to see you and so does mother." John hesitated at first for fear this was a scheme to entrap him, but Willie's smiling face dispelled the thought. Following Willie, he was soon in the Radley house, and they were so pleasant and so genuinely pleased that Willie had met his match that John looked the surprise he felt.

It was Willie's father who explained, "You see, Willie fights all the time; he has told us on many occasions that he would stop as soon as some boy of his own age licked him. You now know the reason why we are all glad." And the father, turning to his son, said, "Don't forget your promise, and bring Peter's son in for Sunday dinner — I'll ask David."

John and young Radley then went to school — Willie was a little boy with red hair, small twinkling eyes, and a bulging forehead. His nature was that of the bulldog, and he now gave to John a friendship which was to last and hold clear and strong throughout his life.

On Sunday, John met the Presbyterian minister, Doctor Sawyer, and his two daughters, and it was not long before he was a teacher in Sunday school, for he apparently could manage the little foreigners better than any one else. It greatly surprised both David and the doctor to

find that John, after a three years' sojourn on the East side, could speak French, Yiddish, Slav, and the Italian dialects. These different tongues John had evidently assimilated, for he had not studied any of them. This knowledge came, of course, from playing with the children.

At eighteen, John had passed his examination for Columbia and was, by reason of his faculties and his unusual means of expression, a power with the foreign-born element on the East side.

Willie Radley was graduated the year after John, and as he was a good scholar, especially in mathematics, his parents hoped to get him a situation in some mercantile house. One day Mrs. Radley stopped John on the street and asked him if he thought his uncle could do anything for Willie with the new savings-bank which was to be opened the following week. Noting the anxious look in the mother's eyes, John said in his pleasant, halting way, "I'll speak to my uncle as soon as I get home, Mrs. Radley," and at dinner that night he spoke of Willie, and it was decided that they would see the president of the bank the next morning.

This gentleman was reached by telephone and he made an engagement for the afternoon, at which time Dr. Sawyer, David, the secretary of Worth's union, Willie Radley, and John called upon him. Dr. Sawyer as spokesman said, "If you can make room for William Radley in your bank you will be conferring a favor on the East side; at any rate we are here to vouch for his honesty." The president, knowing that the presence of William Radley in the bank would materially help him with the vast army of workmen and others who lived around Center Street, looked at Willie with a smile and said, "It will give us pleasure to let this young man have a try at banking."

Willie, who for six months had been trying earnestly to get a job, almost cried with pleasure. Turning to John, whose hand he had grasped, he whispered, "I'll be cashier when I'm twenty-one." He did not know that he was making a prophecy that was to come true; he was merely telling his friend in other words that he was going to work hard.

John was very much pleased with Willie's good fortune, and when the bank was opened for business he advised all his friends to deposit their money there. It was not long before this new institution was doing a thriving business, so much more than had been expected that the directors, at their first meeting, complimented the president on the amount of the deposits. The president, who was a good deal of a man, said,

"It was my good luck to give a situation to a native, one William Radley, who is now working on one of the ledgers. He is bright, accurate, and neat in his work, so that he fills his present position with entire satisfaction. This young Radley has for a friend a young man about his own age by the name of John Worth, and it is to this youth, strange as it may sound, that we owe our financial success. He was not satisfied with seeing a few of the leading foreigners and telling them about the merits of saving money, but wrote letters to all the foreign papers which circulate on the East side. I have had these letters translated and here they are if you care to read them. You will observe that the writer speaks commandingly, that is, he doesn't say, 'Please put your money in the bank,' nor does he attempt to reason. He merely states decisively that they must do so, and yet—well, he doesn't *say* 'must' anywhere, but somehow he has a powerful pen. At any rate I know definitely what his influence is—our

books show it. I asked young Radley to bring his friend in to see me, and he called yesterday. I was also anxious to meet eye to eye the most potential force in man's form on the East side. When I thanked him he replied, 'I have worked for Willie — don't forget that, please.'

"Gentlemen," and the president looked at each one of the directors sitting about the large table, "those words were said to me by the finest specimen of young man that my eyes have ever looked upon. He spoke easily and pleasantly, but I gathered that our large list of depositors depends altogether on our treatment of William Radley. I think, therefore, that we ought to advance this boy in our affections. He is nineteen."

The directors evidently thought so too, for the next day Willie was made receiving teller. But what was also remarkable about young Radley, other than John's influence, was that he was more than ordinarily bright; he was, in fact, a genius at figures. His early promise of great ugliness now seemed cheerfully fulfilled, as Willie's face did not possess a regular feature. His bulging forehead, red hair, and twinkling eyes were, if anything, more pronounced at nineteen than they had been at ten, but notwithstanding his ugliness Willie was extremely pleasing to the eye. He was generally laughing and his joy was good to see. Willie was only five feet eight inches high, but no one ever thought of attempting to take advantage of him on account of his size. It was well known that Willie could stop laughing, and then he would go as far as his stout little heart would take him, for fear had been left out of his nature.

The game of finance now occupied all of Willie's time as mechanics occupied that of John. Both boys in their

differing ways were getting their first feel of things. John's course at Columbia kept him very busy, and through a librarian of the East side he secured an introduction to the librarian of the law library. Here John, after class, would go to study and read, always reaching home for dinner, and at night he worked in the shop, helping his uncle with different jobs.

The particular work now reaching completion was a model of a typesetting-machine which was being paid for by James King, the Wall Street manipulator. On Friday, David told John that it was finished and that on the next day they would go to Broad Street and report to King.

The following day, for the first time, John met one of the great men of the country. He saw a thin man about fifty, above medium height, with hazel eyes, gray hair and beard. But what held him for more than passing thought was King's voice; it was very low and velvety. He was speaking to David about the machine while a clerk was in an outer office filling in a check. When David had received his bill and was about to leave, King said, "My lawyer Riddell tells me that you have built a very nice machine, but he also says that the machine infringes the patents of the 'One Type' machine, which belongs to the recently formed trust. Now, I should like to say here that I inherited the machine on which you have been working from a firm of stockbrokers who failed, owing me a lot of money. They valued their patents and drawings at three hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and as they owed me very much more than this amount, for reasons of relationship to one of the brokers I did not question their valuation. Then you were recommended as a machinist who could properly build this model. During all the time that you have

been at work, or up to last week, I supposed that I possessed something that was at least original, and I now learn from my patent attorney that my patents are not worth two straws. What is your opinion?"

Turning to his nephew, David said, "You answer Mr. King."

"The machine which my uncle built from the drawings supplied to him and the 'One Type' machine are almost identical," answered John. "The man who invented 'One Type' and 'The King', as we call your machine in the shop, are known as professional inventors. That is to say, neither one, so far as my researches reveal, ever invented anything basic or fundamental. They both studied all the expired patents in printing, which is called prior art, and from the inventions of others they borrowed or appropriated enough to get a patent. One of these professionals was a bit ahead of the other, that is, the 'One Type' man got his machine out first; and from that fact, if the two machines were up for trial, he would possess the sympathy of the Court. But I feel certain that they couldn't secure an injunction against your typesetter."

As John spoke he noticed that King watched him so closely as to amount to almost a continuous stare, but it was not unfriendly, for King was thinking, "He talks as Riddell talked." This struck him as odd, so he asked, "You have studied this subject of prior art as it affects printing?"

John replied, "When your machine came to my uncle's shop we made a careful study of all existing machines to see where we could economize on weight and working parts, and as I am studying law at Columbia I thought I couldn't do better than study the art of printing. In

this way I gathered my ideas as to your machine and others."

"I should like to see 'The King' as you call it, on the market as an original machine," King said after a moment's pause, "and moreover, I should not in the least mind the fight that the trust would put up. But isn't 'The King' a lame sort of a duck?"

"It is, as you put it," laughed John, "a decidedly lame duck so far as originality goes. As a matter of fact there is not one part in it which has not been taken from the prior art"; and then John, walking over to the ticker, added, "I feel sure that this is the idea for a printing machine; that is, something run by magnets. Compressed air, that the 'One Type' uses is cumbersome and very old."

"You think, then, that you could build a machine that would in no way infringe 'One Type'?" King exclaimed.

"I am positive we could," John replied.

"What will it cost me?"

John, who saw his chance, said: "If you are not in a hurry, I'll do the work at night and it won't cost you anything beyond the actual supplies."

The arrangement, an indefinite one, was agreed upon these lines.

On the way to Center Street John said to his uncle, "You will remember what I have said about telegraphing, and how easy it is for an operator to pass words over a wire by means of dots and dashes? Now I am going to build 'The King' over again, but this time we follow our own plans and we model our own ideas."

David looked at his nephew with eyes of love and said, "As you spoke I thought for a moment it was brother Peter. Somehow I think you are strangely like him, but

there are times when I can see only Rennie." David, now an old man with bent form, shook his head and added, "It's all in the education, John, so you must not work hard until you are through college and have your papers as a lawyer. My work will then be finished and I can go to Peter and Rennie with a clean heart. Ah! John, not a word about taking your place in the shop now; I mean to carry out your father's last words to me. The words are burnt into my heart: 'I am going to see that he is educated for all that word means.' That's what he said, my boy, so build your magnet machine. Being a Worth and Peter's son, I know you can do it, but work only at night or when you are tired of study. My, John, but you talked well to Mr. King, and he is one of the biggest men in the country; a great gambler they call him, but I have found him a large-hearted man who pays well and always sees me no matter how many are in his office. Ay! and I saw his eyes follow you when you spoke; perhaps he has taken a fancy to you. I hope so, lad, I hope so."

They made a picture walking when on the street, David always dressed in blue shirt, belt, and dark trousers, and this garb of the mechanic set off his great shoulders to advantage. John was dressed much the same, except that he wore a coat of dark material. His height and good looks, and that radiant something which we call force, made many turn to look at him. It was that intangible power which made King, a great reader of character, look at John attentively. At first he saw merely a tall boy of twenty with a broad, white forehead, dark blue eyes, a rather big, straight nose, fine chin, and magnificent teeth set a bit transversely across the gums, signifying, as King knew, an abundance of

will-power. His form was perfect and gave promise of great strength. His hair, a light brown streaked with gold, added the necessary touch in making John a very distinguished looking youth. After a moment, however, King forgot John's appearance, but began to wonder why he was so much interested in the lad. The impression then made never left King's memory, and a year later, when John called upon him, he was admitted at once.

King felt a quaint tingle of pleasure when he pressed John's hand and said, "How is your uncle and 'The King'?"

"One is better than the other; that is, my uncle is not very well, but the magnet machine lives, breathes, and gives forth promise. I called to-day to ask you to come to see it work, and also to say that the papers, drawings, and so forth, for the patent office, are ready for Mr. Riddell."

"Tell me about the machine."

John began talking about the type-caster and setter and concluded his description by saying, "I have only a model now, but it works smoothly and perfectly."

"Very interesting," exclaimed King. "What will it cost to build this machine in quantities?"

"Less than one hundred and fifty dollars." And at this statement King looked at John for a moment and then said, "The other machines are sold for thirty-one hundred dollars. What will you sell yours for?"

"I suggest five hundred dollars. You see the other two machines are loaded with intricate devices; in fact they are a tangle of parts. Mine is simplicity itself. I place the 'One Type' at five thousand parts, including everything. 'The King' has less than a thousand parts; my machine, boxed and ready for shipment, will weigh

three hundred and fifty pounds. This will give you an idea as to its simplicity."

"Have you thought out a business arrangement as between ourselves?" asked King.

"I have a condition which I should like to make with you as between men," answered John, "and because of this condition I won't ask any money down for my labors or for my patents. I'm sure that the machine will sell in thousands, because it is something the printers want,—a cheap, efficient contrivance for translating manuscript into type; and this being the case, the trust will want to embody it in their list. Now, for personal reasons, I won't permit a child of my brain to go to any company in which Mr. Hodges has an interest. I hope what I have said will not influence you against me or the machine. I have worked hard to build something new to take the place of the old, and with each and every device that I hammered into life I saw this talk with you and I was fearful. Yet I went on with the hope that if you took the machine up you would perhaps give me this promise as to Hodges."

"And if I refuse," demanded King, who looked at John with piercing eyes.

"In that case I shall not give you the patents. I am not bound to, you know, as I have not called on you for a cent."

Then the two men looked at each other, and something in John's eyes stopped the quick retort that was in King's mind, for though he possessed a velvety voice and a quiet manner, he could become very violent. At all times he winced under dictation, and this was perhaps the real reason that up to this time he had never had a business associate. Consequently, though he tried not

to show it, he was rather vexed with the condition, not on account of Hodges, for he disliked the man, but he wished at all times to be free to do as he pleased. But with the angry impulse he saw that the man talking to him had some strong impelling reason, so he stifled the hot words and said instead, "May I ask why you dislike Hodges?"

John looked out of the window a moment before replying. He was thinking of his father and his untimely end and of the tragic death of his mother. He wondered if it would be well to speak of his strong suspicions as to Hodges' guilt; he had made up his mind not to, but in the meantime King's anger vanished and he said, "I'll make the condition that you ask in the way you ask, that is, man to man."

And John, seeing something generous in the words, voiced his thanks and then said, "My father was shot when I was a boy of eight. It is my uncle's opinion, as it is mine, that Hodges was responsible for his death. I hope one day to even things up with him."

King, reading the tragedy in John's eyes and wishing to change the subject, said, "The trust will jump on our patents and do everything possible to stop us. But speaking of patents, you likened the movement of your matrix to this ticker. Are you quite certain that you can't be stopped by the courts, always keeping in mind that Playfellow and Lurgan have influence, to use a mild word?"

"I know these men are the most potential beings in the universe, but I'm not afraid of them because my patents will be granted. Telegraphing, which is my method, is old, and so is electricity; both are free to everybody. I don't see how they can stop us."

The old man of Wall Street, as he was sometimes called, again looked searchingly at the tall, steel-like figure, standing so sure and strong, and he thought, how little the boy knew of the world; but his next words showed that he felt more than kindly, for he said, "If the Court decides that we have good patents, I will give you all the money you want to fight the trust, as of course I'll want you to manage our company. But I do this only on the condition that you don't ask for money in advance, and that you and Riddell look after the patent question until it is finally decided." And before John could answer he asked, "Is your disc or matrix made of copper?"

"It is."

"Isn't that metal soft and won't it wear easily?"

Speaking very quietly and enunciating each word carefully, John replied, "I have discovered a method of hardening copper; of making it as hard as nickel."

Then John stopped and looked at King, who inquired, "Isn't that a great discovery?"

"I believe it is."

"Can you patent your process?"

"I hope to one day. I stumbled across the scheme to harden copper in my work on steel. You see my father had a way of converting iron stone into steel pigs at one process, and this has been my study at the laboratory in Columbia." Seeing that his listener was slightly incredulous, John went on with a laugh, "I'm afraid I have talked too much — good day," and John started toward the door. But King stopped him to say, "What about your interest? Shall we say a fourth to the inventor?" And John again voiced his thanks and went home very much pleased with his day's work, for he knew that King was practically the only force in the country that George

Playfellow, Joseph Lurgan, and Thomas Hodges had not put harness upon.

They would have bought any machine, valuable or worthless, that King brought them, and at whatever price asked, with the hope of winning his favor. For these three men, notwithstanding the fact that they controlled banks, oil, steel, copper, and railroads, were afraid, desperately afraid of King's terrible attacks on the watered stocks of their institutions. They realized they had no way or scheme to control him; he was a solitary individual of great wealth who loved to bear down like an avalanche on these big folk who fattened on the gullibility of the people. King had no love nor hate for Playfellow or Lurgan; they were his spice of life. Every once in a while they would try to break him in the market, but these attacks only left King a little wealthier than he was before.

King never tried to hold a stock that they were hammering or to break it against their powerful support. He was too wise for that. He would in his turn attack another of their big industries and in that way collect principal and compound interest, so that he was feared and rightly named the King of the Street. He was a breeder of fine horses as well as a manipulator of stocks, and at this time in his career he had never produced anything that could be rightly claimed as a benefit to mankind, but he had indomitable courage and he also knew what the word "truth" meant. Not for the gift of the state would he play to the gallery of public opinion as did Lurgan and Playfellow when they wished to cover up some gigantic steal. After a big coup from the public, Lurgan would invariably found an art gallery or library. He was a pirate of the old sort but perhaps possessed a

principle or two that was not inundated with the passion of money-getting.

But his partner in all great enterprises, Playfellow, was much more thorough — he possessed a faculty for amassing wealth that amounted to a disease. He, too, gave money to universities, but in small lots, as he seemingly hated to part with a cent, and yet it was rumored that he was worth a billion. Such accumulation spells genius, and he undoubtedly possessed a great intellect and wonderful courage. When he became the wealthiest man on earth, he appealed like Lurgan to the commonwealth; but not in the same way, as every day and waking hour he chanted to the people through his God and theirs. He appealed to the goodness of the Almighty while he sickened and deprived hundreds of thousands of His followers of their rightful dues.

Playfellow's history, as written, showed that he had suppressed, burnt, and pillaged, as all great conquerors have done. He especially loved bribery and all kinds of underhand dealings, as is shown by the way he handled the large railroads by making these great corporations give his oil a rebate so he could stifle the earning power of the small producers. Occasionally his schemes resulted in wholesale murder, as in the case of a copper mine that he and Hodges floated. It was an old shaft, and when the ore gave out they sold the property to the public for millions. This was such a fine deal that Playfellow prayed especially hard and long to the Almighty for guidance on behalf of his fellow-men. But in the midst of this prayer — it was on Sunday, and he was at home after addressing a Sunday-school class upon the merits of a godly life — he received a cypher dispatch from the superintendent of the mine, which read: "Struck very

rich lead of copper at a depth of five hundred feet. Wire instructions as the miners would make find public. I won't let them out until I hear from you."

Playfellow immediately sent for Hodges and before afternoon service they arrived at a decision. Hodges had said, "We have sold out all our stock; what shall we do? We can't let a bonanza of this sort go." And Playfellow replied, "As the superintendent is one of our trusties, have Bill Sharp 'code' him and then on Monday give out that the mine is barren. This will permit us to buy all that stock back for almost nothing." And Hodges, laughing with pleasure, followed these instructions.

On Monday the public read of a shocking disaster in the Williamite mine. It was reported that the air pump went wrong and forty miners were suffocated. The little word "suppress" which Bill Sharp sent had done the business neatly and expeditiously, and Playfellow's financial turn on the street made his flabby white face wear a benign look for many a day.

CHAPTER IV

JOHN DISCOVERS THE LOST STEEL PROCESS

WHEN John reached home he found his uncle very anxious to hear about the interview with Mr. King.

"I tell you that it was wise not to ask for money," John began, "as I firmly believe that he would have chucked the whole thing had we done so. As it is, he gets the patents and we get one fourth, which is generous enough, but he insists that I make good on patent rights to the Court of Appeals if necessary. And when I have done this, he will come out into the open with the machine. In order to test the patents I am to build and sell three machines, the cost of which he will pay. If the trust fights, it will be a long wait, but the terms are his. What do you think?"

"All right, my boy, it's all right. It's a great start for a boy of your age. I should like to see you beat that man Hodges into the grave. And you'll do it one day, or you are not Peter's son."

"I don't think I shall ever forget to hurt him," John said in a quiet voice full of suppressed force. "But you left your mark on him, uncle?"

"Age — age," snarled the old man, holding out his right arm and bending it to show the working muscles. "It was a power once and I didn't give him all it possessed. The pity of it is that I did not kill him when I had the chance; but I'm old now, boy, and getting weak. When

I go downstairs, I like to lean on your shoulder. My! but you have grown big and strong"; and getting up David went to a desk and, taking a number of papers from it, continued, "These are now my pleasure. When I die put them in my coffin, John. I want to take them to Peter and Rennie, so that they may know that you are educated." And spreading one of the papers out on his knee, the great wreck of a man read again, as he had read many hundred times before, the announcement that John was a lawyer of New York, and a graduate of the school of mines of Columbia. Then he read that John had passed first in his class; going on he came to John's nickname of "The Mechanic" in college, and this pleased him too. With a smile on his lined face, he said, "Don't you ever feel that you would prefer law to mechanics?"

"No, uncle mine; law produces nothing. I am going to stick to the family calling. Shall I continue on Mr. Pickwick or would you prefer something else?"

"No, John, I like Dickens, but sure you don't want to do something else?"

"I like reading, uncle, and you know that it is a new world to me. Before I graduated I never had the time to read a novel, so they are pure joy to my mind and heart, especially Dickens. I was really sorry to part with Micawber. Suppose we go back to him to-night and see if anything turns up."

David laughingly said, "He was a daisy and I like him hugely. But say, John, Hodges has got Uriah Heap beat to death," and then, looking at his nephew with anxious eyes, he cried in a weak voice, "Look out for that crowd; they maim and kill to obtain their end. I know. I know and I hear a lot through the union of their cold-bloodedness."

"Don't bother about them to-night. Here is your pipe, so let us be at ease with Micawber."

All John's evenings were now spent with his uncle, who continued weak and ailing. It seemed as if he had held together by pure will-power until John had graduated. David's giant strength seemed to fall from him then and he was compelled to spend most of his time in the sitting-room upstairs, only going to the shop occasionally to see how John was getting on.

There was nothing especially wrong with him; it was merely a case of premature old age brought on by extremely hard manual labor. He had given to Rennie's child all his loving attention, and he was now receiving the same care that he had bestowed for so many years, and yet neither ever spoke of love.

In John's youthful days on Center Street, David had tried many times to get him to speak the baby language that he had found so delightful in Jersey, but after the death of his parents John never again said, "Me will—or me won't." That home tongue was buried in his father's grave. It was a long time before John forgot his parents, or lost the gnawing sense of bereavement, and he was only brought to realize the great love that his uncle had for him by the slow incidence of time. He was deeply grateful now at manhood that, though raised in the midst of terrible and awful squalor, he was clean physically as well as mentally. He also realized at this time what his education meant to him, and what he owed to that uncle who was now loosening one by one the sinews and tissues that had hitherto held his life together in one compact and well-knit whole. So he gave to him that which David already possessed, his heart; and the lamed man, weeping, sometimes said, "This is my

heaven." But even in weakness David never forgot to urge John to discover the steel process; more than once he said, "You can do it, I know," and "Your father hid those papers," and again, "But where did he hide them before that man Hodges killed him?"

In the laboratory at Columbia John had tried hard to find some scheme for simplifying the process of making steel, but had not up to the present succeeded. He had studied the subject practically as well as theoretically, and while working on iron stone he had found a way to harden copper. As yet he had not gone far enough with his tests to determine if his was the only way, and though a scheme for giving copper a higher industrial position among the metals pleased him, it was not altogether what he sought, and his nature, endowed with a patience akin to that of the Oriental, would not allow him to give up. He knew how the Pittsburg blast furnaces worked so as to manufacture steel; he stopped working on chemical action and started merely to study and ponder on the question. That a fine grade of steel was wanted for the higher class of electrical work he was well aware, and he knew that the electric people paid large prices in addition to the duty for the European steel, especially the kind that came from England. He was also aware that the Krupp armor and guns were superior to similar articles made in America.

The countries that produced these superior grades of steel did not possess the ore field of America, and yet there were many large concerns in America that bought steel abroad. Consequently there must be something wrong with the product of the blast furnaces of this country.

John was too young to think of failure, so he pondered

on the steel process constantly, reducing each and every theory that came to him to its fundamental basis, but up to this time without success. Again, it was his father's process, that which his parent approved of, and though John was only eight years old when his father was killed, the boy never forgot the manner of his death nor for whom he died. So the dark, swarthy author of his being meant much to John Worth, more even than the saint-like picture which he carried in his heart — his mother. But he never spoke of either, though he liked to hear his uncle talk about his brother Peter, and from the pictures woven by a brother's love John built an image in his soul.

David said once, "He wouldn't scrap as I scrapped. I was always through after my adversary was on the floor. But Peter was different; he never was through. I must say, though, that he scrapped my way very seldom and the rough characters of my day would much rather face me than my brother. Peter would not fight unless he had reasons and I never met a man that had a better hold on his temper. In business he always smiled when he was done, but that smile often made me laugh. I shiver when I think of it now; it was so cold and merciless. And by God — he made those that cheated pay, and pay hard."

John had very little spirit for the gaieties of life; he knew many girls casually, but was not intimately acquainted with one. He was not in the least shy or reserved, but his relation to women was purely impersonal. As a truth he was too busy to give thought to the side of life usually so seductive to hot-blooded youth. The only pleasure he took outside his work was as a member of the committee of his union, and as an officer of the East side political club, which he had joined to look after the

interests of the foreign born. He saw the power in these organizations, and the sense of power always seemed to make his lungs expand. From early boyhood, or from the time that he had assimilated the languages of the East side, he had been called upon to settle disputes. Perhaps it was this early training that secured for him, when he reached manhood, positions of trust in these large organizations.

At twenty-two, though there were no lines on John's face, and his brow was not seamed, he was called old by the community. By this they meant wise, for his judgment was never swayed by passion. He was in fact a very cool, accurate reasoner. Add to this his fine appearance and it was not surprising that he grew largely into the heart of the East side.

When John had, as arranged with Mr. King, completed three machines, he called on three printing establishments on the East side and to each one he sold a machine for five hundred dollars. When these had been working a few days, he saw a prosperous contracting machinist, who, after examining the machines, and seeing them work perfectly, told John to go ahead with his advertisements as he would build all that were wanted for two hundred and fifty dollars each as soon as the jigs and fixtures were ready; he agreed to turn them out, from start to finish, in three months.

Then John inserted an advertisement in the *Inland Printer* setting forth the merits of his machine, and this advertisement carried the strongest kind of testimonials from the three printers to whom John had sold machines. This was the first intimation that Harold Coutts, managing director of the Printing Machinery Trust, had that "The King" had appeared in its new form. He took

quick action by starting at once for the Oil Building to see Thomas Hodges, who was one of the owners and directors of the Machinery Trust.

When Hodges heard the name of the inventor, he interrupted Coutts to say, "Worth, you say? What's his first name?"

"John," replied Coutts; and Hodges knew that it was the son of Peter Worth. Recollections of that name did not add anything to his complacency, and when he had heard Coutts to the end and had read the advertisement, he cried angrily, "Smash this man Worth."

Coutts departed happy and smiling, firm in the belief that he was making headway in the affections of the men who controlled the greatest money citadel ever built. He was endowed with a good appearance and plenty of push, and as Lurgan, Playfellow, and Hodges were the directors and principal owners of his concern, he promised himself that he would, as Hodges suggested, smash Worth soundly. Coutts had some reason to feel elated that morning, because he was not forced to wait in an outer office for an hour or two, but was at once ushered in to Hodges in his private office and not into one of the many little booths with numbers, to which he had formerly been taken.

After his visit to the Oil Building, he went to the patent attorneys Whitehead, Harlan, and Doyle, and in a few moments was closeted with Mr. Whitehead, the head of the firm, who finally said, "If you are sure that the matrices are the same in principle, I'll ask for an injunction," and this was decided upon.

Legal machinery was speedily set in motion and the case was tried. After the trial, Riddell called on Mr. King at his hotel, and his first words, "Injunction denied,"

filled the old man's heart with pleasure and he asked for a fuller account.

"In the morning I shall have a complete transcript of the evidence which I'll send to you. Whitehead is as clever as sin and is one of our most celebrated lawyers. It is his scheme to dig traps for opposing counsel and witnesses to fall into, and then, in a perfectly good-natured way, give them a hand out of the hole he has placed them in. He does this jugglery to show the judge the strength of his case. I well know his methods for he has used them on me. It is easy for him because he studied science as well as law and is a mechanical expert.

"Knowing Whitehead, when court opened, I felt sorry for Worth and, figuratively speaking, I looked to see the gaps in the floor. But soon, very soon, my sympathy had switched to Whitehead, for I never saw a man more completely prostrated than he was. Worth turned him and the managing director Coutts endwise, then he would flap them over sidewise. In other words, he has forgotten more about printing-machines than they will ever know, and as to mechanics, he is their master. The manner in which Worth demonstrated the feebleness of their efforts to harass him makes me laugh when I think of it.

"It all came to a head when Worth started on 'prior art' and began his demonstration that 'One Type' was completely appropriated from former inventions, and that started a discussion on special mechanisms. So Whitehead, a bit red in the face and not yet quite down and out, began from insufficient knowledge to question statements that the defendant made. Then Worth, who had with him records of all prior inventions that affected his assertions, began reading from issued patents the points

he was making, and from the drawings of both prior art and 'One Type' he drew his convincing parallels.

"When the defendant had clearly proven that 'One Type' did not possess a single mechanism that was new, he began photographing in words his own machine and showing at the same time that it bore no relationship whatever to 'One Type.' His last words to the court, as near as I can remember, were, 'I got the idea for "The King" from the stockbrokers' ticker; to that instrument and to electricity I owe my invention. Not one part of my machine in any way infringes the "One Type" patents. I have here an offer from a manufacturing machinist to build my machine for two hundred and fifty dollars. We shall eventually build the machines for one hundred and fifty dollars. We can then sell the machine at a big profit at five hundred dollars. "One Type" and "One Line," known as the trust, realizes what our price to the trade means to them; our machine can do newspaper work quicker and better than "One Line." Our machine can do book work better than "One Type." "The King" can also set a line of type better than the best hand work that was ever done, because its justification is perfect, because it is automatic.'

"These three printed pages which I now hand you were set by "One Line," "One Type," and "The King." Look at them and I venture to say that you'll be able to pick out the one set by "The King." Note the spaces between the words of the one set by my machine; how regular they are, and how perfect is the face of the type."

Then Riddell walked to the window and looked from his altitude over busy New York; he heard the eternal rumble from the street, and without thinking about them, he saw the twinkling lights. Turning to King he added

in a subdued voice, "Many times to-day, when Worth was discoursing on prior art, he had need of the books on prior inventions to illustrate a point, and he never let his eyes drop to the table where they were. His hand would find what he wanted and it would also turn the pages to one wanted, and then he would read a specification that he had been citing. I hope," and Riddell looked searchingly at King, "that you followed closely what I said; his hand, without the aid of his eyes, would find, not only the book he wanted, but the page containing the very words of illustration that he sought." Riddell stopped for a moment and then continued, "I have heard of mechanics and others being handwise, but I never saw such a thing before. It made me feel creepy, *for the hand moved as if with separate life.*"

Again Riddell walked to a window, but though his eyes were opened, he did not see the lights nor did he hear the unending roar; he was thinking of that wonderful hand.

King interrupted his thoughts by asking, "Did you notice anything else?"

"Nothing else," answered Riddell, "only that moving hand. He is clever as a lawyer and a genius in mechanics, but I have no way of telling you how cold he is. He was never flurried, he did not even show a glistening eye; he was — I have it," and Riddell smiled — "automatic; and yet as we lunched together he laughed and talked as a boy. Then he is fascinating to a degree which I have never seen before in a man, but in court he was another person.

"I gathered to-day that he is a man it won't pay to cross. Perhaps Whitehead annoyed him, though he didn't show annoyance. And to-morrow, or whenever

the proceedings have been read by lawyers generally, Whitehead will not be the first patent attorney in New York, as he was this morning. For this day Worth killed his reputation as a leader. But I must be going."

At the door he turned to say good night, and King asked, "What will the trust do now?"

"They will appeal and then the fight begins. But don't forget what I said about a hand that can do its functions independent of its eyes; that means unusual government of mind over body. The trust men are going to get acquainted with John Worth" — and then Riddell was gone, leaving King in some doubt as to his precise meaning.

Meanwhile John was telling his uncle all about it and enjoying his first victory. To David he said, "When I get the printing-machine going, I'll finish my work on steel, for then I'll have an income." But John did not know the trust people nor did King, as the next morning they both read an advertisement warning printers, under penalty of suit for damages, against ordering "The King."

The advertisement stated that the machine was a clear infringement on their patents and they meant to protect themselves. They started suits against the three printers who had installed these machines. This was a great surprise to John, but he more clearly grasped its meaning when outstanding orders for his machine were cancelled. He then looked for a speedy trial, but the trust did not desire speed now, as John soon found out. King waited the final decision of the Circuit Court of Appeals on the patents.

Only a faint echo of this fight reached Lurgan and Playfellow, as the Printing Machinery Company was a small matter to them. Hodges, for personal reasons, was

interested, and he it was who telephoned Coutts regarding the advertisement warning printers. "Put this in all the large papers throughout the country and then delay the final argument before the Circuit Court of Appeals all you can, and in the direction of delay I expect Whitehead to do a great deal."

Early one Sunday morning John started for Jersey to see if the flowers on his parents' grave were thriving, and afterward, as it was only a short walk to his old home, he went to the house, though he knew it was in ruins. Only the wreck of the factory was standing, as the steel company that owned it had never improved the land or used the old foundations. He soon noticed something new nailed to one of the walls of the factory: "This property for sale." John, who would have liked to own the property, sorrowed because it was beyond his reach. Presently a few drops of rain warned him to seek shelter, so he walked into the roofless ruin, and going through the old office he stood under the opening which led into his father's private foundry. The iron door was still on its hinges and was held open by a stake driven into the earth.

As the rain increased and John had no umbrella, he stayed where he was, which was a fair shelter from the summer shower. In front of his eyes was the top hinge that held the door, and as John looked at it he wondered why it was made with so large a surface. Lowering his eyes he perceived that the bottom hinge, though as strong, did not cover so much space, and he marveled at this discrepancy. Stooping, he saw that the lower hinge was a stock size, and then examining the other more carefully, he noticed that it had been constructed with care. He gazed searchingly at the flat surface of the hinge and pondered over the waste of metal. Then quickly taking

one step forward, he peered at it closely, but age and rust had obliterated all signs.

Mystified at its size, he picked up a rock and struck the large face of the hinge, and his heart beat rapidly at the hollow sound it gave forth. Then he began tapping the rim of the plate and at length a secret door in the flat surface of the hinge flew open, and John, now excited, looked into a receptacle about the size of a cigar box, filled with papers. Pulling these out he took a first quick look at them, and then he put his hand in again and found a short bit of tubing. Having now possessed himself of all the contents of his father's private safe, he closed the door in the hinge. The rough drawings would not have been intelligible to an ordinary person, but they made John's heart thump with pleasure. Then he saw a formula which made his eyes glisten, but what fascinated most was the tube. Swinging his hat he cried, "Ah, father, we both arrived at the same conclusion; a continuous converter!"

John started for home in order to examine with care the papers, which did not contain a word in writing outside of the formula. But he knew that he had in his possession the product of eighteen years of labor and thought; he also knew that he now possessed the secret of making iron stone into steel at one continuous melting.

CHAPTER V

THE FIGHT WITH THE STEEL TRUST

BEFORE his application for a patent was completed, in order to gain practical knowledge of smelting iron stone to pig-iron, and melting iron to steel, through his union John secured work in a large smelter. Here he labored for six weeks, and then for three months he worked in a Pittsburg steel mill. Consequently it was winter before he was back in Center Street, telling his uncle, more fully than he had given in letters, the story of his absence.

John first gave the shop his immediate attention, as his college expenses, patents, and scientific books had eaten up his five thousand dollars, and his bank account was low. In the course of a month he had plenty of work on hand, and then he devoted all his evenings to drawing plans and specifications. John was a rapid writer and draftsman and in six months had his patent on steel ready for filing.

He then called on Riddell and asked him if he would see to the foreign patents, and when the lawyer had looked over John's papers, he exclaimed, "This is larger than type-casting, eh?"

"A bit, yes."

It was more than two months before John saw his patent in the official gazette, and then he called on Riddell again to say, "I see that my patent has been allowed, but I dropped in to find out where the type machine is."

"I am delayed at all points and I can't say now when we shall secure a hearing," answered the patent lawyer. "But can't you do something to stir the powers up? I ask because I read that a certain John Worth has influence over many votes, and noses count in our broad land of freedom."

John laughed and was going to say that he would help, but he thought of his steel process and the probability that he would need all his influence for that which was life to him. He had built "The King" with a great deal of pleasure, for it was his first real invention, but at no time did he look on it as distinctly his own as he always thought of it as belonging to King. It had served a purpose other than its ultimate duty, for it had brought him into contact with a man of great power on Wall Street, and in order to get King's ear in a friendly way, John would have been satisfied with very much less than one fourth. Now in talking to Riddell he felt that the final argument was only a matter of time. He would have liked to see the case through the courts as that would mean employment in a large way, but he did not care to sacrifice any great part of his influence for the type machine, as the steel process was the true product not only of his own but his father's brain. Though the type-caster was a big thing in its way, it was as nothing compared to his steel process, so he said diplomatically to Riddell that he thought he could help a bit and would do all he could, and asked how this delay affected Mr. King.

"Oh, he never says a great deal, so it's hard to visualize him. You see he is not like the other great ones, Playfellow, Lurgan, and Hodges. They go after the industrial wealth of the country, but so far King has been satisfied

to view their game as a spectator. Now he has taken your machine up, and if that goes he will become as insatiable in this field as he is in his special domain. If I may say so, he is timid of this venture; at any rate he wants to know definitely as to the patents and he is hard to advise. I say that, because I told him not long ago that he was perfectly safe in building the machines, and I think he was a bit annoyed with my suggestion. I did a good stroke for you both to-day by bringing the matter a little more into the light. Whitehead called me over the telephone to ask if our name for the machine was purely a grandiloquent one, and I said that it was named after its owner, James King," and with a laugh Riddell added, "I heard a whistle over the insensate wires, so I'm convinced that my information was definite news to him. You see your East side is not so well known as the Sahara, and as King did not want his name connected with the trial, they have thought, I'm sure, that they were fighting merely the inventor. I have taken, as you see, a leap in the dark, as I don't know how King will like what I have said. I hope, however, that some one will go to him with a bluff, and then we shall see King with his coat off."

But Whitehead was not concerned about the type-caster when he spoke to Riddell; he was securing information for Hodges, who had also read the official gazette and had noticed that a steel process patent had been issued to John Worth. He then called up Whitehead and told him not to wire to Washington for a copy of the patents, but to go there at once and investigate. Hodges said further: "I have heard from Coutts that Jim King is interested in the new type machine; let me know if this is true."

Hodges waited impatiently until Whitehead returned with a copy of the patent, and then took it into his office and read it carefully. With Whitehead he went over it — specification by specification. "Worth has nailed up every door," was the comment of the lawyer, and Hodges answered nothing but went to see Playfellow, to whom he said, "Here is the Steel Trust's coffin."

Playfellow, who had talked with Hodges before about the Worth patent, replied, "I think you had better telephone Lurgan, as the Steel Trust is his creation." In a short time Lurgan was listening with wide-open, receptive ears to the communication of Hodges and Whitehead. When they had finished he exclaimed, "Then we must buy this man Worth; but who knows him?"

"Jim King does — Whitehead was told that he is backing Worth's type-caster, and I suppose you know that we have a suit on for infringement."

"How do we stand in that case?" Lurgan spoke peremptorily to Whitehead.

"We don't stand at all — we are fighting for delay."

"Can't we get around this steel patent? I don't care a damn about the other," exclaimed Lurgan.

"I have studied this steel patent for three days," exclaimed Whitehead, "and I can't see a weak point in it. My advice is to buy it."

"I suppose he is some low-down brute who wants a lot of money," cried Lurgan, "but we won't give up." And then turning to Hodges he said, "You see him — I don't care to go to King except as a last resort."

When he had gone, the prayerful Playfellow said to Hodges, "You had better fix the matter up with the inventor as Lurgan suggests. Give him stock — we have, as you know, a lot of it in the treasury. Of course, tell

the president of the company what you are doing so that everything may be in order, and send him a copy of the patent as well."

Then Hodges went back to his office and, strangely enough, he began thinking of his young manhood and his then great ambition to make steel at one melting. This train of thought brought him to Peter Worth and his death, and for the first time in many years Hodges shivered. He wondered vaguely what the son was like, and with this thought he moved in his chair restlessly. Through Bill Sharp he had heard what David Worth had said about his brother's death, and now he walked up and down the room, not with remorse, but with growing anger, and muttered, "I'll" — But just then the figure of Peter Worth was flashed on the film of his brain and he didn't finish his threat to kill, because he felt a tightening of heart and for the first time in his life he realized what acute fear meant. At that moment he would not have faced John Worth to save his steel stock; and his all, except a million in oil, was in steel.

Coutts went immediately to see John and returned promptly with the announcement that Worth would not sell. Whitehead and others called, only to come back with the same answer. Then Lurgan interviewed Hodges, and at first the great financier spoke savagely against John, for, as became a buccaneer, he had a violent temper. But all the time he was well aware that the situation was serious, so he called on King.

"Look here, Jim," he said, "we will stop fighting that type-thing of yours, if you will arrange with that fellow Worth to let us have his steel invention at reasonable figures."

Lurgan did not realize that he was still vexed and had

spoken in a way that annoyed King, who answered, "I can take care of the 'type-thing,' as you call it, and I don't like your manner this morning."

This information was given in King's usual velvety voice, and with his strong hazel eyes looking into Lurgan's red ones. The banker and promoter saw that King was likely to be unpleasant and, as that was the very last thing he wished, he apologized by saying, "I'm sorry, I'll begin again. Will you arrange for me, Playfellow, and Hodges to meet Worth here any time to-morrow?"

King, somewhat mollified, replied, "What is all the bother about?"

"Worth has invented a way to make steel by a continuous converter or heated tube. Perhaps you have noticed that dentists use a little furnace electrically heated. That is quickly Worth's main scheme — as in one place in his patent he calls his tube an endless oven; and in this oven, which is controlled by automatic devices, he puts in his air and his formula. Hodges, who is the best steel chemist in this country, says that the Worth scheme will work, and he also says that there is no way to get around his patents. Now you see why I want to meet Worth."

"I'll send a message to him and will let you know if he can come and at what hour. I may add that I have no interest whatever in this patent of Worth's. I say this so that you may understand that I have no control over him."

"Say, Jim, now that I have cooled off, won't you handle this matter for me?"

King, remembering what John had said to him about Hodges, smiled as he replied, "I'm afraid I can't. I don't mind bringing you together, for I like Mr. Worth."

King made this statement slowly so as to give the words point. "But that is as far as I will go."

An appointment was made for the following day at two o'clock and, as the hour drew near, King was curious to see if Hodges would appear. Only Playfellow and Lurgan came, and shortly afterwards King, with a feeling of keen delight, introduced John. Then he said, "Mr Worth, these gentlemen want to buy something from you, and you may consider this office as if it were your own."

John thanked Mr. King with his eyes as Lurgan began, "We would like to buy your steel patent"; and because he had noted King's deferential manner in speaking to Worth he said, "We will give you five hundred thousand dollars in common stock for your invention, and will pay you a yearly salary of twelve thousand dollars if you will put yourself on our pay-rolls."

The prayerful Playfellow exclaimed, "That is a magnificent offer for a young man of your age, and you ought to give thanks to God for his goodness."

After these words King walked over to the ticker and John wondered if he were laughing, for there was a significant movement of his shoulders.

In a perfectly even voice John replied, "I came here to meet you gentlemen with the hope that you will accept as final my answer to your propositions and those others that come continuously to my shop. I won't sell my patent to the Steel Trust at any figure. I say this rather than argue on the value of your offer."

"Are you casting a doubt on our offer?" It was Lurgan, annoyed at this sure-tongued mechanic, who spoke.

"I am merely stating that I will not accept your price

or any price, but if you wish I can, of course, throw a lot of doubt on your common stock."

"What about the salary?" asked Playfellow, in an unctious voice.

"I don't care to work that way."

With ill-suppressed rage, for he was vexed with this common mechanic who slurred the stock of his steel company, Lurgan said in a tone of warning, "We can fight."

"You certainly know how to do that," John remarked in a pleasant voice.

The smile that went with the words put Lurgan in a rage. He did not dare to vent his temper before King, who stood beside the ticker looking like Fate, so he modified his voice. "But what are you going to do with the process? We will take good care that you don't start a mill in this country, so why not sell it to us?"

"I think I can arrange for a mill all right, and I won't sell; that's flat. So with your permission, Mr. King, I'll withdraw."

King walked into the corridor with John and said, "I can get you that half million in cash, if you will wait a moment."

John faced King with a determined look on his face and answered, "You are very kind, but I won't take money from the man who destroyed my father. As you of course know that through his mill, and through his initial work as promoter with Lurgan, he is to-day the largest owner of steel in this country. I say all this to show that the five hundred thousand would come largely from him. He and I have an account to settle and one day I am going to balance it. I should like to use his own method of business destruction first, then

later on his kind of violence. Of course all that looks like a big job, and perhaps I shall have to forego the business end of my programme, as that may be too big for me, but the man to man part is on a much more equal footing. I am frank with you because I appreciate your kindness in speaking to me the way you did before them."

King returned to his office and found Lurgan and Playfellow with their heads together so that they could speak without being heard. Playfellow had asked, "Is King back of this too?" and Lurgan answered, "It looks like it." Then Playfellow added, "Let us break him on the 'Street'; at any rate we can keep him so busy holding his bank account together that he will give up ideas of erecting steel mills and printing-machines." When King entered they shook hands with him affably in parting and said, "We are sorry we couldn't fix that little matter, but adieu."

When they had gone, King busied himself arranging his stock deals, for he did not like Lurgan's smile; and King's way to circumvent them was to give an extensive order to his brokers to buy Steel Common.

Playfellow and Lurgan went to the Oil Building where they were joined by Hodges, and it was decided to test the practicability of Worth's scheme. After three months Hodges called another meeting and said, "This bit of steel has been made by the Worth process, and it is the very best bit of metal that I have ever tested. No matter what test it is put to, it won't crack or break and consequently its resisting power is very great. To illustrate: a steel plate of his metal, eight inches thick, will stop any known projectile. See" — and Hodges took a silk handkerchief and held it up by the corners — "if you throw a stone at this, you will see the silk bend to wrap the stone. Take the same resisting power of the handkerchief in

something else that is not fibrous, and if the stone doesn't go through it breaks the object at which it is thrown. Or take the rubber tire on a vehicle, which is perhaps a better illustration; it never breaks, and so it is with this fibrous steel. A shot may dent or bend the eight inches, but it will never go through it. I have now told you about the quality of the steel, but that's not the important part to us, as our steel is good enough.

"The Worth method would cheapen our cost of production by more than thirty per cent." Hodges ceased talking in order to let this fact sink into the calculating brains of Lurgan and Playfellow. Then he added slowly, "If we started all our mills with this Worth scheme, our common stock, which is not to-day worth the paper upon which it is printed, would pay sixteen or seventeen per cent, and in three years it would be selling at one hundred and ninety or two hundred."

The three men looked at one another, for they owned many, many millions of this common stock and more could be purchased in the market for nine dollars per share. They saw the stupendous game that could be played, but they also saw the "if" in their path in the shape of John Worth. With a sigh Lurgan said, "It's too bad that fellow won't sell. What are we going to do?"

And Playfellow, looking at Hodges, remarked, "Can't we force him? He has no business holding up the bounties that God gave him, and I think he needs a lesson." Hodges, who understood, smiled and said, "I understand," but Lurgan, the robber, did not understand. He knew, however, that both these men used means to gain their ends that were beyond him, so he got up and quietly walked to his office, sure that the Worth process already belonged to the American Steel Trust Company.

CHAPTER VI

JOHN EXTENDS HIS INFLUENCE

THE following day an insurance company which owned a great deal of property on Center Street wrote to John Worth, stating that he must vacate their premises by the end of the month. The letter was short, peremptory, and to the point. Without showing the letter to his uncle, John called on the men at the insurance office, with whom he had always dealt, and was told that they knew no reason for the order which they had received. A glance at their list of directors gave John the reason, for there he saw the names of the steel magnates. So he went home and told David, who could not at first realize the truth.

"Why," he cried, "I was born here, and many times we could have bought the place, but the insurance people were always so pleasant, and their rent so reasonable, that we looked on them as friends. And friends they were, too, as more than once, in hard times, they let us take our own time to pay the rent. There must be some mistake." David called on his landlord of many years, only to find that he had to move on.

It was the Steel men's first underhand blow and it had a bad effect on David, who now seemed to cling to the old place as a child holds to its mother. He would get up at night and wander about, and once John found him crying. John at once sought new quarters with the hope

that a quick severance would help his uncle, but any place which he agreed to take was refused him the next day. At last he noticed that he was shadowed. But landlords that Playfellow and Hodges could control did not own the entire East side, and finally John secured a small place. When moving day came and all the tools had been taken away, John turned to his uncle and with a laugh cried, "Come, uncle, it's all in their way of fighting; so don't bother."

Then John saw a curious look of happiness come into the eyes of his uncle, who answered, "Gee, Uncle David, me div 'oo normus whipping." As he listened John's heart stood still, and when his uncle laughed happily and boyishly, the awful truth dawned upon him — the old man had lost his reason and fancied that he was the John that he had known and loved in the long ago. John lived ages in the few seconds that he looked at his uncle, who was taking off his coat and saying, "'Oo velly old man, Uncle Davie, but tourse we must do fings to 'oo."

And then John, entering fully into the spirit of his own youth, humored his uncle by calling him John, and cried, "Come, let's go to our new home," and David now went joyfully, talking about the city as though he had never seen it before.

It was not long before the East side knew that the trust was after John Worth, and now, calculating as to the future, he wrote the account of the Worth troubles for the foreign papers that circulated on the East side, and worked hard to advance his influence with his union and in his political club. That last scene with his uncle at their old home killed, perhaps, the last spark of gentleness that John possessed outside of his love for his demented uncle, and he now struggled for power. As he

possessed a most attractive personality, and also for the reason that the mighty rich were against him, the East side folks gave him their warmest esteem and sympathy.

After John had been six months in his new quarters, through the union he heard that the trust people were making steel his way at one of their mills in Pittsburg. At once he began an action and, six months later, before Judge Williams of Brooklyn, who had heard his other case, he was given a favorable decision. Then the Steel people appealed and began to delay matters, but they knew perfectly well that one day the case would come up before the Court of Appeals and it was this that they feared. By means of delays they could carry it on indefinitely, but as all cases must eventually be tried, they worked hard to push Worth into the ground. Their purpose was to crowd him so hard that he would cry for mercy, as all the others had cried, but the man they were fighting had no such cry in his soul. His shadows were now busy keeping work from entering his door, and consequently he was compelled to move on and on until at last he and his uncle were quartered in the Salvation Army Hotel of the East side.

Mary Radley, weeping hysterically, had long since been sent home. John himself looked after his uncle, always keeping him off the street as much as possible, so that the authorities would not seek to commit him to an asylum. The fact that David now thought that he was a little boy helped John in keeping him in his room, for he, when admonished, would say, "All right, I'll play wif me carwars and look out the windel at the peoples."

Hodges, who had John under his particular care through Bill Sharp, who was still his trusty, tried to get the Salvation Army people to throw John out. The manager of

the hotel spoke to the head of the organization, "Little Mother," as she was called, who told him to show Mr. Worth and his uncle every attention and to allow them to stay as long as they liked. When this message was given to Sharp, he grinned, feeling sure that Hodges could find a way to move the Salvation Army.

But no way was discovered to move a people who not only preached good-will to all men, but practised it as well, so John and his uncle were not compelled to leave this haven of rest. Moreover, the manager did not send them a bill, for "Little Mother" came in one day later and stated that from absolutely reliable sources she had learned that the Worths were being persecuted and he was not even to ask them for money. If John Worth should ask for a bill it was to be given to him, of course, but not otherwise. The devotion of John to his imbecile uncle pleased the "Little Mother" and she desired to aid him in any way possible.

It was in this hotel that John found a good clean home for his uncle and at a price proportionate to his earnings by manual labor, for his enemies had finally driven him to a bare living wage at odd jobs wherever he could get work. All the big factories supplied him with work for a time, but they, too, eventually shut him off, and John knew that he was mercilessly hounded and watched. He was made to realize the power of Lurgan, Playfellow, and Hodges, but he never complained to any one nor did he live on his friends, for he well knew that his hold on the East side depended upon his qualities as a man. He secured enough by hard work to pay the small amount that the Salvation Army charged for food for his uncle, and a bed for both of them. In face of this he was, if anything, more grimly determined than ever to make his

process good in the eyes of the law, and then to make the trust pay for stealing it.

In the evenings when he was not engaged to speak at one of the many East side political or social clubs, he played the games that his uncle enjoyed, and after the aged man was in bed, John would read.

He heard the first faint roar of the general election with profound pleasure, for now the chance to advance his case was coming. He knew well how pregnant in possibilities the East side was in election time, and it was not long before he was asked to speak in Woking Hall before a gathering of East side voters. One sentiment in his speech caught the eye of Mr. Wood, the president of the West End Club. It was: "In this campaign we will pick out men who will best serve the interests of the country, and we shall also try to make the East side an independent section of New York." These words were marked and sent to the President in Washington, a New Yorker by birth who was out for a second term.

In four days John found a note signed by Henry Wood, dated from his club, asking for a talk on the political situation, and John replied that he would be pleased to grant the interview any evening after seven.

Wood replied in person the following night. After talking with John for a few minutes and finding that Worth had very little to say, he made up his mind to trust this strong, sterling-looking man, and exclaimed, "Mr. Worth, the President and I are friends from boyhood and I sent him the speech you made at Woking Hall, and here is what he says, in reference to it." Wood read, "If you can't secure us his support, get him to come to Washington and I will talk to him; I'll keep any appointment you make."

John heard these words with keen delight and answered, "I'll go, of course. Arrange for next Saturday at three o'clock or any time in the morning. It's merely a question of trains."

On Friday John received a wire from Wood reading, "Three o'clock to-morrow." He left his uncle in charge of the manager of the hotel, satisfied that he would receive every attention.

Punctually at three John was at the White House and was received at once by the President, who greeted him in the hearty, straightforward way that had won him so many friends. "I want to carry my native city this fall," he cried. "Can you help me?"

John replied by telling him first about his steel process patent, and concluded by saying, "I simply want justice and that is all I solicit from the head of our nation. I am fighting big people and they do not fight fair; they steal — I am using the right word — for they have put my process in five of their mills, and they must feel sure of holding my case back forever or they wouldn't take such liberties. Now you alone can arrange to have my appeal argued at the fall term, because you have appointed all these federal judges to office, and at a request from you they will clear up the calendar and bring my case forward where it belongs." Here John paused to give the President time to think over what he said, knowing well that he had asked a great deal.

But presently he began speaking about the East side and soon they were laughing together. When he felt his visit over, John said, "I'll try and make your native city appreciate concretely its native son."

When John was talking about his steel patent, the President was thinking of the campaign fund, but mercenary impulses did not thrive in his mind, so he said, offering his

hand to John, "And I now promise that your appeal will be argued in October. I say this openly, for I feel that I can trust you."

John was, of course, shadowed to Washington, and a wire was sent to Bill Sharp, which read, "Patent with number one" — which translated was that "John Worth was closeted with the President." Very soon after the receipt of the wire by Sharp, it was in the hands of Hodges, who at once interviewed Playfellow. Here was a move entirely unexpected, and it made both Hodges and the prayerful Playfellow think very hard.

These two men were now very well acquainted with the kind of man they were fighting, and for a moment they were in doubt as to their next move. It was decided to get Lurgan, who knew the President and was also a native of New York, to call upon the head of the nation. On Monday, Lurgan, somewhat averse to appearing in such a matter, finally consented, and having made an engagement over the telephone, called on the President. They shook hands pleasantly; both were strong, energetic, capable, and they possessed many traits in common. Lurgan had followed his father's footsteps of banking and had developed a bank of some standing into a financial institution which was known over the whole world, not as a bank, but as Lurgan.

The President had followed politics and he had more than madegood. Both had been reared in New York, which is an education in itself, and they were infinitely brave and daring and they were both liked by the people. The way Lurgan held up the industrial stage-coach was an amusing picture that gave the public great pleasure, and the manner of the President's wooing of the nation as a bride made all love him. But the two now looking into

each other's eyes differed on the money question, as the President, even by the poor, was not regarded as rich, and the nation loved him because it knew that his hands were not dirty. Men from the North, South, East, and West said, "Faults, yes, loaded with them; but he is clean right through to the bone."

Though the public admired Lurgan's magnificent knack of amassing money, they could not say that he was clean, and this was where the two men differed. The President, brought up in politics, soon learned to fear dishonest money, and he had no use for underhand dealing. After Worth had departed, the President found out through his attorney-general, and by a talk over the telephone with his friend Wood and Dr. Sawyer, another friend on the East side, that John Worth had not told of his own personal troubles, as brought about by Lurgan, Playfellow, and Hodges. Consequently the President was in entire sympathy with the noble man who had asked him, as the head of the nation, for justice. He knew quite well what Lurgan wanted to talk about, and he was not disappointed, for the banker launched his subject at once and, getting warm as was his habit, more than hinted that help to Worth meant no campaign fund from Wall Street.

The President, being a politician, asked how he had heard of Worth's visit. Lurgan, who did not wish the President to know about the sleuths and spies of his confreres, told a lie. "Oh, he is a common mechanic and, of course, brags about his interview with you."

Then the President changed the subject by saying, "You of course know Dr. Sawyer and his church."

"Everybody knows him — a good pious man."

"I am glad to hear you say that, because he is a friend

of mine, and his daughters are intimate with my wife. I called him up by telephone after Worth was here, and what he told me about that man enlisted my sympathies wholly. But it is not his career of good that I want to speak about, but another matter which Dr. Sawyer narrated with indignation. He stated in most precise English that the Steel Trust has men constantly shadowing Worth to see that he doesn't get work, that they had driven and were now driving him from pillar to post with the most malign hatred." The President, with a hard smile, went on: "What have you to say about that?"

Lurgan, taken by surprise, cried out, "That is their affair."

"Quite so; but you have also told me how you got your news of Worth's presence in Washington."

Lurgan, now fairly caught, became angry and said, "You mean to help him then?"

"Yes, and also for the purpose of showing you, Playfellow, and Hodges, *et al.*, that you are not yet running this country."

In a short time it was known all over the country that the President and Lurgan had quarreled. John read this item wonderingly, and then he started the work of turning the East side vote, firm in the belief that he was nearing the end of his troubles.

CHAPTER VII

THE DEATH OF DAVID

As soon as Lurgan arrived in New York he sought Playfellow, and in strong language told him the result of his interview. "We must work quickly now, as the President won't help us." When Lurgan had gone, Hodges was sent for, and after they had discussed Lurgan's failure, Playfellow uttered just one little word and that was "Pike." With a look of relief on his face, Hodges said, "I'll have Sharp telegraph at once to Oil City." And that evening Pike read, "Oil strong New York," which meant that he was to take the first train for New York.

When Pike arrived, he went directly to the Oil Building and sent in his card to William Sharp. After a short time he was shown into booth thirteen, and there he was received by Hodges' right-hand man who at one time had been a mechanic in Worth's New Jersey factory. Bill had improved considerably since the day he received twenty-five thousand dollars from Hodges, though that scheme had failed to give his master the steel process which he sought. Yet it demonstrated definitely Sharp's ability, and with this snug sum he was soon able, through his employer, to make big money. Hodges, with the greatest power and wealth, continually found that there were many little Worths in the world, and Bill had a knack of dealing with creatures who dared to build fences in his master's path.

Sharp was a short, thick-set man, with a large nose, crafty gray eyes, and a laugh that labeled him of New England, for it had as much twang to it as a mouth organ. He was facile and unscrupulous to the nicety of ripe judgment. His office was next to that of Tom Hodges, and on the door one read, "William Sharp, Oil Dealer." To carry on this fiction of complete entity in himself he owned and operated a number of pumps in the oil region. The stranger, on going into this room, saw only one door and that led into the corridor, but in the corner of the room, next to the hall, there was what appeared to be a large clothes-press, and through this Sharp had access to his master's room. But this cabinet, if we may call it such, also possessed a window high up on the wall side, and through this window Sharp, by electric means, could see, without being seen, the occupant of booth thirteen. For this little darkened room, lying along the corridor as it did, took its space from Sharp's room. There was a door leading into it from the hall, and also a small door opening into it from the cabinet.

By previous arrangement Pike was shown into this dark room, and when Sharp had satisfied himself that Pike was there, he walked in and said, "John Worth at Salvation Army Hotel, East side. If you understand and have memorized, repeat." And Pike said, "John Worth, who is stopping at Salvation Army Hotel, East side." Then Sharp handed a package to Pike, saying, "Other half when you repeat that line in this place." Sharp then went back to his room, and Pike, a thin, wiry little chap with wintry eyes, left the Oil Building, and in half an hour he had engaged a room for the night at the hotel designated. He was rather pleased that his work was of so simple a character, as on many occasions he had

to remain in room thirteen for an hour or two, to memorize his duties.

He knew by the message given him that one John Worth stood in the path of Oil, and that he was to dispose of him as he had disposed of others. In Pike and creatures like him that Oil controlled, we find the explanation for Playfellow's immense wealth, for he possessed the very great essential of being able to look on men like Worth as hindrances to his growth and progress, so he had them removed much as the ordinary person would insist on a mad dog's being shot, and with no more compunction. To his regret he was compelled to observe a certain caution when he undertook the work of suppression, so he surrounded himself first with the necessary help. Then he arranged so well under the laws of America for his own security that his "help" became adepts in taking care of themselves. For instance, Pike felt quite certain that he had received his orders from Sharp, but the voice was muffled and he could not swear to that fact, and as the room was dark he could not see. He knew, of course, that everything was all right, as the two thousand dollars which he received was the best kind of an editorial on faith and trust.

If he were caught and confessed, as some did, Oil was no way implicated as they always dealt through an independent like Sharp. Publicity meant nothing to Playfellow, as his history, very carefully written, laid bare to the world his career and his methods. He cared not for the carpings of the little ants of life, because his soul preached to his mind that he was an emissary of progress, therefore of God.

So the Pikes of business glorified his being with pure joy, and he loved to hear all the last details

of a life that had wrought him worry. With some degree of eagerness he awaited the following morning when he, too, would go into the darkened room, and if Pike repeated his line, he would then be asked for the whole story. This particular case was not to have the usual finale in the booth thirteen, because Hodges' instructions had been too cryptic.

It was necessary for Pike to find John Worth, so he waited until dinner time, when he asked a waitress if Worth, the great inventor, were in the room. The girl pointed to a table some distance away where two men sat, and Pike now knew his work was easy. So, when the men indicated were leaving the room, Pike followed, and he heard one say before the elevator door closed, "Uncle David," and again, "Uncle David, me." But Pike heard no more, nor did he wish to. He learned what he wanted to know, and he watched the car's progress upwards by means of the indicator and when it stopped at the fourth floor, he sat down in the office with no plan as yet formulated.

Half an hour afterward he saw the taller of the two men who had been pointed out to him leave the hotel, and then he took the elevator and got off at the fourth floor, intending to ask a maid for Mr. Worth. Not seeing any one, he walked down the hall until he came to an open door and, looking in, he saw his man leaning over a table writing, a smile upon his face. Pike walked boldly in and said, "Good evening," and David, for it was he, answered, and went on drawing pictures.

Pike saw his opportunity and rammed home the knife that was made for him by the razor people, expecting to see the head drop forward, as he had struck

on the left side and over the heart. But the knife was deflected by a bone, and as he jumped from his chair David stretched forth his left arm and caught Pike by the throat, and in death David's mighty hand held tighter and tighter. Pike struggled, but that grip closed like the gates of a lock. Half an hour afterward the manager said to a call boy, "Go and play with Uncle David," and the youngster ran with glee, for all loved the man who thought he was little John.

A wild shriek brought many to the room of death, and there they saw a sight that was fascinatingly terrible. David was sitting in a chair, his head lying on the table. In his right hand was a pencil and in his left the thing that had stabbed him. Pike's body from the hips down was on the floor, and the rest was held up by the arm that had squeezed out its life. The assassin's eyes were protruding from their sockets and his tongue was hanging out like that of a tired dog. There was no blood, as David had bled internally, and the scene told its own dramatic story. There was the knife in David's side, and there was the partially hanging body of the assassin held by the arm of the giant.

The manager raised the limp head of David and read in a large, scrawling hand, "John, don't forget the papers for Peter and Rennie," and that was all. The manager put the paper in his pocket and then sent for the police. The assassin was carefully searched by men from the station, but not a paper or mark could they find upon him. In the early watches of the morning John detected a faint odor of oil, and then he suspected that this was a way to hurt him, and that night he did not say his prayers.

Old friends of David and John, who came in to pay their respects, shook their heads and said, "That was

intended for John; no one would kill a crazy man." And this was the solution of William Radley, who was now cashier of the savings bank. He had not seen much of his friend lately, for John persistently kept out of his way, owing to Willie's position in the bank which he did not wish to jeopardize by friendly intercourse. Willie understood, for the president of the bank, who was friendly to him, had told him that it had been necessary for him to report that Radley no longer knew John Worth, as otherwise they both would soon belong to the ranks of the unemployed. But to-night Willie's heart was sore for his friend, and, coming to a quick resolve, he left the hotel and walked down the Bowery until he reached Mark Lane. Following this street for a block, he came to a saloon called "The Frenchman." Soon after going in, he was saluted by Rochon, the proprietor, who said in a sad voice, "Bon soir, Willie, we have heard the news. Très mauvaise, n'est-ce pas?"

"Is Tony in?" asked Willie, and the Frenchman, with a note of gladness in his voice, cried, "Do you give the order?"

"I have asked John many times to do so, but he always shakes his head."

And then Rochon, in a voice full of suppressed rage, exclaimed, "Those thugs from the country are an insult to the East side, and now one of their tribe has killed a God's man. Come, I'll take you to Tony; he is in the back room alone."

When Willie entered the small room he saw a swarthy-faced, heavily built man, with a disconsolate air, sitting hunched up in a chair by the deal table, leaning his head on one hand. This was Tony, and with a snarl in his voice he cried, "What is it?"

"I think those sleuths ought to go."

"I have heard that many times," replied Tony, relapsing into his dejected attitude.

"Why don't you chase them out?"

"I can't. I promised John to leave them alone, and, well, a promise is a promise — especially to him."

Then Willie sat down and started to urge Tony, but the ex-prize-fighter, turning upon him, cried, "You know that he looked after my mother when she was sick and buried her when she died. If he should walk in now and say 'Chase!' I would cry for happiness. Bah!" exclaimed Tony, "they came to me — those dogs — and I have wanted to kill ever since."

Just then the door opened and there stood John, who looked at Tony and, putting his hand to his forehead, said in a voice that clicked like the turning of a lock, "I'm tired of them now, Tony."

And then noticing Radley, still in the same hard voice he said, "Willie, see if Rochon has anything good to drink; my throat cracks."

Neither Willie nor Tony said a word of greeting, for John's face was very white and there was an intense look of pain upon it. But what made him terrible to see were his eyes, the whites of which were as red as though enamored in scarlet. Both Tony and Willie were so startled with his appearance that the words that sprang to their lips on seeing him were hushed. Before the drink was brought in, Tony had disappeared, fearful lest John's words of permission should be recalled. At the door of the saloon he turned and whispered to Rochon, "At last!" and then vanished into the street, only to return stealthily a moment later. He noticed a man watching the saloon, and he chuckled with grim humor. Soon he saw John

and Willie come out of Rochon's and walk toward the hotel.

John was saying, "Odd that Tony cleared out so quickly, as I wanted to impress on him not to harm the watchers — merely to chase them out."

"Oh, he understood all right, as we were talking about these thugs before you came in," Willie replied, "and he had agreed to take them to Broadway and tell them not to come back."

"Sure, Willie?"

"Quite sure, John," and Willie, looking sideways, smiled at the street.

The next morning Hodges read in the morning paper of the tragic death of David Worth and an unknown, and he knew, and so did Playfellow, that their scheme had miscarried. That evening other mysterious deaths on the East side were reported, and the following morning a dead man was found at the door of the Oil Building. Investigation showed Hodges and Playfellow that all these men were their trusties, or Pikes, which seems a better word, and Playfellow, for the first time in his life, felt afraid.

CHAPTER VIII

IN MANY COURTS

AFTER the funeral John took a small room in Center Street and eked out a living by doing odd jobs such as shoeing horses and plumbing. Never again did he see a shadow, for he walked secure in the loving eyes of the East side. And Playfellow knew this, and he prayed nightly against this devil that balked his car of progress.

It was the middle of summer, and Steel Common, owing to big dividends, was soaring higher and higher. Though he, Lurgan, and Hodges owned millions upon millions of the stock, an amount equal to their holdings had been foisted upon the public, and when they were in readiness to buy more, shortly after they had appropriated Worth's scheme, they found that King had been in the market and had quietly purchased an immense holding of the stock. They understood this move to mean that King was trying for control and they immediately forced the stock up to one hundred and fifty by making heavy purchases. But a great question confronted them, for they well knew that if Worth won in the Court of Appeals, his bill of damages would be immense, for their balance sheets showed to a penny almost what the Worth process had done for steel.

There was only one thing to do and that was to buy the judiciary, even if it cost them a few millions. But such an undertaking required courage and nice work.

Legislatures were fairly easy for them, and so was man generally, but the judges they wanted to get at were men of honor and prominence and all three were federal appointments. The history of each one was read with great care, but the deeper the research the more unimpeachable the characters of the judiciary shone out.

It was Playfellow, in a thin, cracked voice, and without calling upon the Almighty, who suggested seeing John and making a compromise. But neither Hodges nor Lurgan said anything in reply, nor did Playfellow again mention compromise, for they well knew that the man whom they were hounding would hold no intercourse with them. This was the terrible situation that confronted them when they heard that one of the circuit judges was killed in an automobile accident. Then they saw a ray of hope ahead, especially if they could get someone appointed who could swing the other two into line.

"What about Judge Bachmann?" Hodges asked.

"He is too big a gun for that position," Lurgan replied; but Hodges had an idea that was growing into working shape, for he had just remembered a remark of his wife's. She had said one day: "The president of the West side trust who dined with us last night told me that the Bachmanns are in debt." And with this idea in his brain Hodges went down to their bank, which was on the first floor, and said to the cashier, "Find out what paper Adolph Bachmann has out, and report to me at once." An hour afterward the cashier gave Hodges this information: "His house on Seventy-sixth Street is mortgaged for thirty-seven thousand dollars, and he is overdrawn at his bank for two thousand dollars. He has a note out secured by collateral for seven thousand dollars."

"Buy note and mortgage to-day and telephone cashier to press for payment of overdraft. Again I say rush, and when you secure Judge Bachmann's paper, write for immediate settlement. That will, I think, make a call on you imperative, and when he comes let me know so I can be in the assistant cashier's room next to yours. Say pleasantly, but firmly, that if you don't get the money you will foreclose. When you get him sufficiently worried, touch the call bell and I will come in accidentally, as it were."

Hodges found the judge, whom he knew quite well socially, very much perturbed over the cashier's threat to foreclose. After Hodges was appealed to, he said, "Come to my office and we'll talk the matter over," and the judge, seeing hope ahead, followed.

When in the office, Hodges exclaimed, "I'll see if Mr. Playfellow is disengaged, as I should like you to know him." In a few moments Playfellow, the red prince of bribery, was talking pleasantly to the judge.

"We have a very interesting case coming up in the fall term, Worth *vs.* American Steel, and as we are very much involved, I should like your opinion. For the sake of peace we offered the inventor a million in cash, but he is one of those creatures that nothing can satisfy, and at the time of our offer we showed him clearly enough that his one melting scheme was already in operation and as old as the hills, and that he had found nothing wonderful or new. Now, as you are a great writer on law, I should like you to read our brief. Of course, I'll ask the cashier of the Unit Banking Company to go slow as to the mortgage and note, until you have looked over what our patent lawyer Whitehead has written. The law, and especially its last word, the 'judge,' for some reason thinks

that it must always take the side of labor, and that is our difficulty. Consequently we feel that some one ought to be appointed to fill Judge Alton's place who really knows not only law but the great country we live in as well; and this is the steel age, you know, and we have made it that. If, then, the Court of Appeals should decide against us, you can readily see what a turmoil the country will be thrown into by the closing of all our mills, for we shall be compelled to do that if we lose. As I said before, we would give a million to avert this disaster, but I can't, unfortunately, deal with this fellow Worth because he is so unrighteous." And then, smiling at the judge, Playfellow added, "You are just the man to fill Alton's place, as from your great position in law you could make the other judges see the light."

"I'll look over Whitehead's brief," the judge answered, with eyes on the floor. On his way out Hodges said with a smile, "This seems to be your lucky hour as Playfellow has taken a great fancy to you." The judge went home and, with a new feeling that somehow made him sad, read what Whitehead had written.

The following day Playfellow made things a little clearer to the judge, and he staggered home like a drunken man. Going to his own den, he thought the whole scheme over, staring in front of him with hunted-looking eyes. It was either the street or wealth, and he was now waiting to see what Hodges would write him, for Bachmann's last words were, "I want to think it over; in the meantime I must have your proposition in black and white, every detail, so that you are as deep in the mud as I am."

Playfellow had said, "Of course, Judge, as it is for humanity's sake, I'll have Hodges write you under his signature"; and this satisfied Bachmann.

Late in the afternoon Hodges called on the judge in person and, handing him a paper, asked if that would be sufficient. The judge replied, "Yes, that will do. Now go and leave me to fight this out alone. If I decide to take the appointment, I'll write, as agreed, a letter of acceptance."

When Hodges had departed, the judge, telling his wife that he was very busy, sat buried in his papers late into the night. Bachmann was a German by birth and had studied law in Minnesota, where he achieved success. At the age of thirty-eight he married and came to the larger field of New York. Here even greater success crowned his efforts, and he was now known as the greatest living authority on patent laws and his books had a wide circulation. He was at the moment working on a many-volumed history of inventions and of the laws by which they had been safeguarded. Having started this monumental undertaking five years previously, he would have it finished in another year. During these years of research and writing he had earned very little, so there was a continual outlay, and his wife, a favorite socially, spent a great deal of money. To meet the demand, Bachmann was obliged to mortgage his home, and had done so unknown to his wife. He was still in love with her and was now selling his soul so that she might sing all day. In a week the President's attention was called to Bachmann by a senator, and he was appointed to fill the vacancy caused by Alton's death.

John was, of course, very much interested as to who would get Alton's place, and he was delighted when he read of Bachmann's appointment. Though he knew him only through his books, he admired him greatly and thought this was his good day.

The first case on the court calendar was the type-caster case, and John, with keen pleasure, turned to Riddell after the judges had rendered their decision. "No more fences now, so King can go ahead." But he was thrown into the abyss of despair by their decision upon the steel process, as only one judge was for John and two against him. He had lost his appeal, and when he heard this he was dazed for a time, and then he smiled grimly and said to himself, "I see now why King wouldn't go ahead. They have bought two judges and this is what he feared."

The favorable decision to Steel made its common stock go to one hundred and ninety, and Lurgan, Playfellow, and Hodges almost wept for pure joy. Now every mill was ordered to put in the new process, and every smelter was instructed to fit the new apparatus for removing the dirt from the ore.

John, true to his promise, took up with energy the President's fight for the East side. One day he called on King by request and the old man said to him, "I'm ready to begin manufacturing now."

But John said, "I'm going out of town after the election, for I don't know how long. Riddell is familiar with the machine and I should think he could effect an organization that would work smoothly and well. As I cannot attend to the initial part of manufacturing and selling, I will, of course, reduce my fourth to any figure you think right. In this connection I may point out to you that we have not as yet signed any papers, so that we can arrange a new plan here and now. I may also state that Riddell has an order for the jigs and fixtures."

King listened to John with apparent interest, and then,

as was his habit, he went and looked at the ticker. After he had viewed the latest development of the market, he said, "There is no hurry; I'll wait until you return and then we will make our own machines. If you will give me a hint as to the kind of property we need, I'll buy it now."

John told King of his father's old place in Jersey and gave him a few points as to the buildings required. When he had finished, King said, "May I ask why your return is so indefinite?"

Knowing that he could trust the man, John exclaimed in a voice of suppressed power, "I lost my steel patent here for reasons other than a defective invention. If type was good, steel was much better, as it was more fundamental. So I am going to Minnesota to open the case again. As you may know, for patent suits this country is divided up into circuits. I am going to another circuit, and if I win there the trust will have to appeal, which means that the Supreme Court of the United States will then have to try the case. As it stands now, if I appeal I will have to pay all of the expenses of the appeal. As these are very large I cannot afford to do so, and besides, I have picked out a circuit where there are relatively few manufacturing concerns, and also one that stands high in political honesty. I may be absent for a long time, for, of course, they will fight every inch of the ground. If I fail there, then Hodges will be compelled to look into my eyes, man to man, and answer a question which I will put to him about my father and uncle."

"You are hard to down," King said. "At any rate you have my best wishes."

Then they separated, King feeling a decided yearning toward this grim, determined man who would not admit

failure. Then his mind turned to John's errand West and he saw what that meant to the market, for now John Worth's name was fairly well known all over America; and King looked over his holdings of Steel Common and began quietly to unload. When Riddell called in answer to a telephone message, King said, "Buy the Jersey property that this memo describes and make another contract for me to sign, giving Worth one half instead of one fourth, and put the Jersey property in his name as well. When you have attended to these matters I will give you directions as to buildings, jigs, and fixtures, and other matters."

Riddell was greatly pleased that John had penetrated a heart that had always seemed to him impenetrable, and counted this feat not the least of what John Worth had accomplished. When the lawyer had finished making his notes, he said, "I should like to know how to help Worth, but he is hard to get at."

King answered, "You can't help that kind of man in the way you mean. I, too, see the signs of an empty pocket, but I value his good opinion too high to sacrifice it by an offer to help."

"You are right; but do you see the change in him? It's too bad that he lost that suit; I suppose he will pitch in now and build type machines."

"I suppose so," King murmured.

"Are you going to the Steel Company's big dinner to-night? They're celebrating, I hear."

"I am not going," said King, in his slow, halting way, "I'll watch for the election returns in the café of the Frontenac, and I hear that the East side is going for the President. I tell you Worth is going to grow one of these days."

When it was known beyond a doubt that New York had voted solidly for its native son, there was great rejoicing, but the man who, more than any other, was responsible for the noise, the clamor, and the shouts, was just starting to work his way to the West. He was sad and lonely as he bade good-by to the streets of his New York, but he strode on into the unknown, sure of himself and sure that he would yet make his country, through its laws, admit the justice of his claim.

It was nearly midnight when John Worth melted into the darkness of a graveyard in New Jersey, which held what was mortal of his mother, his father, and his uncle. Going down upon his knees he bade them good-by. In his heart there was intense grief, and there in the cold wind of the coming winter, he wondered if it were all worth while. But the thought was only transitory, for he well knew that in a few moments his face would be turned to the West, and that the morrow would find his soul urging him on, and ever on. He turned and took a last look at the twinkling lights of New York, and said aloud to his soul, "You have been stirred to-night by the initial impulse of all things — love — but I wonder if in a search of the world you could find another soul so depressed. All those I loved are here — destroyed in order that greed might live. I put you aside knowing that love will not now come to me, that love of others is not for me. I am but an atom in the great scheme of the universe and yet I am an heir of the ages. Soul, you have asked for justice, because that is sought and won now, as it has been for all time. Yet in the calendar of the strong man's life there is room only for success. You and I are going in search of that now, and when we get it we shall have our accounts made out,

and when I see the final payment in sight, I don't want you to obscure my vision, as you have done to-night, with the mantle of truth and honor."

Putting his hand on his uncle's headstone, he continued, "God has you now, uncle, and you are reading the papers to your brother and sister," and, sobbing, he added, "And God was good to take you to them clothed in your right mind. I have your last words, which will rest, when my turn comes, with my body." And the wind sobbed on, as he faced the West and began his journey.

There was another soul in agony that night, and it was not a clean trouble like John's. Judge Bachmann was suffering the tortures of the damned. He had sold himself, thinking he had a hold on his tempters in Hodges' letter to him detailing the compact they had entered into to defraud Worth. And though the fact of having been bought galled him and was ever before his eyes, so that he grew nervous and wakeful, he thought his burden was one he could bear to the day of his death.

When he thought of his favorable decision as to Worth's type patent, it pleased him as a toy pleases a child. With that as an excuse he tried to quiet his soul as to the steel patent, but these lapses into joy and content were but momentary. Worth's shocked eyes were ever looking at him, and at times he had to bury his head in his hands to lose the impression. But always, always his thought ran, "I have Hodges as a partner in crime, so I'm sure that my loss of honor won't be known." He would then read the letter again to be sure that it was all there, every detail of the deal that made him a criminal. But alas, poor soul, he did not know Hodges' or Oil's way of handling a matter of this kind, but his awakening came election-day morning in the shape of a letter asking him to come

to the big dinner at the Château Frontenac, and this invitation was signed by Thomas Hodges. The judge, with knitted brow, looked at this letter as if fascinated, for it was not the same writing as the other; he compared them and they were not in the least alike. This second letter had been sent to the judge for the purpose of putting him right; to show him that Oil never tied a noose around its own neck.

It was a pretty scheme, Machiavellian even, and worthy of Hodges and Playfellow. It was one of their little ways to block investigation into their methods and forestall possible unpleasant disclosures. They had smiled when the unsuspecting judge fell into their trap, and they smiled again as Hodges wrote the invitation.

There was now just one word in Adolph Bachmann's mind, and that was "tricked," "tricked." He wrote a long and careful account of this whole transaction to his wife, and when this was finished and signed he attached to his confession both of the letters signed by Thomas Hodges. Then he put on his coat and called on Mrs. Hodges, of whom he asked pleasantly, "I should like to ask you which one of these letters is in your husband's handwriting; both are signed in full." Mrs. Hodges immediately exclaimed, "Why, that one," pointing to the invitation. The judge, thanking her courteously for her kindness, went home and, going directly to his room, shot himself through the head.

Two days afterward Harold Tyndale arrived in New York to find his sister prostrated in grief and shame. She moaned, "Oh, Harold, love me — love me, or I shall go insane." Harold Tyndale was himself one of the leaders of the Minnesota bar, and though, when Adolph Bachmann had fallen in love with his sister Florence, he

had at first interposed every obstacle in his power to the marriage, he finally gave way when he found how deeply his sister's affections were engaged. But he had never been on really friendly terms with the judge.

However, he allowed no trace of this to appear as he comforted the weeping child-widow, but after reading the dead man's confession, which she placed in his hand, he said, with a tone of protecting tenderness, "After everything is done, I'll take you West, and there, dear, we will begin all over again. You will be housekeeper as afore-time and I'll be your brother as of old. Now, child," as she looked up with streaming eyes, "I have, as you know, always considered Adolph weak, so I was in a measure prepared for the disclosures. But I was not prepared for his death; that shows at any rate he was a man."

And the sister put her arms about her brother at these words and sobbed, "Oh, Harold, it's good to hear you say that much. But why — why did he leave me, as I should have loved and comforted him — no matter what he did." Changing her mood, she cried, "We won't take that dirty money, brother, and you must make things right for Mr. Worth."

"Trust me, sister, in all things." And as if in a revelation, she saw the difference between her brother and her husband, for the words, though simple, carried with them something that brought a little sunshine to a darkened soul. Her anger against Hodges ran hand in hand with her sorrow, and as she looked at her brother's face with the overhanging brow, and the dark eyes that now looked like live coals, she realized more definitely the great difference between the only two men whom she knew well. She saw something in her brother's strong, swarthy face that made her feel that Hodges' fate was included in

those words. "Trust me, sister, in all things." And she was not wrong, for Harold Tyndale was in a seething rage at the scoundrels at the Oil Building, whose record of evil he did not ignore.

He did not go near them, but he swore to have satisfaction, and in the few days that he was in New York he tried to find John Worth, but he could not trace him. "I'll take my sister home, and come back," was his thought, and soon they were in Minneapolis.

Going to Court House the morning after his arrival, he met a friend who cried out to him, "I have a bit of news that will make this a hot center for many moons. Worth is going to bring action against Steel in this circuit. I have just seen him; he's a fine-looking fellow. So long. Glad you're back."

Harold Tyndale smiled at his friend and said, "That is news surely." Then at once he began to make Worth's path easy, delighted that fate, or luck, had brought the inventor to that part of the world where he, as a citizen, had considerable influence. Tyndale was a prominent lawyer and had secured his high position by hard work and dogged perseverance.

He was a silent man and many said he was cold and harsh, a few thought he was cruel, but the public at the polls had reposed faith in him and this faith was never broken. Honest and clean himself, he demanded those qualities in others, and his career showed him a relentless enemy of the public boodler. The great crime against Worth, which had involved his sister, filled him with a burning desire to hurt these big folk who had wrecked a life he held dear and who had insulted the law as well.

As the days went by, something told him that his little sister was fading away to her beloved Adolph, and this

knowledge only augmented his desire for a terrible revenge — a revenge that would leave a gaping wound to fester.

He called upon the judge who would first hear the Worth case, and put into his hand Bachmann's confession and the two Hodges letters. John's case was first on the calendar for the spring term and no delays were allowed, because the judge had cried to Tyndale, after reading the confession, "How ghastly!"

John won, as he was bound to do where justice and honesty ruled, and then the Steel Trust pulled every wire for delay. But again in the fall term no delays were tolerated, and one December morning John learned that he had won again. Now he saw the Supreme Court of the land before him, and he journeyed East, not knowing Harold Tyndale or his silent work for his good.

The news of the trial occupied pages in every paper, and King followed his young friend through the long appeal line by line. He followed as well the decline of Steel Common, for now that commodity was at fifty and King had made the biggest turn in his career, and he was anxious to find John and help him to get started.

He knew, of course, that Worth was very poor, but he did not know that when John arrived in New York, in the midst of a terrible snow storm, he had not a cent in his pocket. But the heart of the man as he walked through the station was not despondent. In truth he was happy to be back in New York, and the fact that he had had nothing to eat all that long day in a delayed train did not bother him a great deal.

CHAPTER IX

LURGAN'S DAUGHTER CATHERINE

IT was about six o'clock in the evening when John set out to walk through the snow down Madison Avenue, on the lookout for a job that would yield him the price of a meal. After he had gone a few blocks, he thought of a plan which, if successful, might mean "supper." Stopping before a large house on a corner, he walked boldly up the front steps and asked the butler, who appeared in response to his ring, whether he wanted the sidewalk cleared. Fate must have been pulling hard on John's side that night, for the butler said, "Yes; and if you will go to the side entrance I'll give you a shovel."

John was soon hard at work in front of the house. Just as he finished the Madison Avenue side, he noticed a carriage drive up, and he laughed lightly to himself when Lurgan got out and went into the house. About half an hour later the same carriage drove away with the great man, and John idly wondered if it were taking him to fulfil some important engagement.

He was now near the end of his task, so he gave all his attention to it, especially as he felt a trifle weak, and chilly also, despite his hard work. When he had finished, he threw the shovel over the fence and approached the front door, hardly realizing that he staggered in walking. But some one saw the reeling man, and, as she had been watching him at work for some time, she knew that he

was not intoxicated. So when John said to the butler, "I have finished, and if you will give me twenty-five cents I'll call it square." Catherine, Lurgan's only child, came into the hall and said, "Slater, show this" — she was about to say "man," but something in John's appearance stopped her, and she concluded, "this gentleman into the morning-room." At the door John moved aside that she might enter first.

When the young woman had invited her guest to be seated near the open fire, she left the room, and in a few minutes a footman brought a large bowl of soup, which John took with pleasure. Soon the footman reappeared bearing a small bottle of claret and some biscuits, and John, looking at a large oil-painting of Lurgan over the fireplace, smiled, and, as he was very hungry, he ate the biscuits and drank of the wine.

Presently, his hostess rejoined him and, handing him an envelope, said, "My father always gives this amount for having the sidewalk cleared." She added, with a smile, "I must put it in that way because you said twenty-five cents was enough."

As Catherine looked searchingly at the tall snowshoveler, whom she had taken for a hot-house flower run to seed, she saw quickly his good looks and the hair streaked with gold that fell over his broad white forehead. She observed, also, the iron-like firmness of the face, and the strong blue eyes. She saw that he wore a black comforter wound around his neck, fastened with a safety-pin, and a closely buttoned coat of thin material, which, by its plaster-like fit, made her suspect there was little clothing underneath it.

This thought reached conviction when the snowshoveler made a motion to put the envelope in an inside

pocket. Then, changing his mind, he put it in one of the outer pockets, and when his arm moved, Catherine saw the working muscles rise and fall. She felt certain that the man before her was in extreme need, and yet he was talking to her as if he were clad in fine raiment, and did not know what hunger was. Catherine was puzzled, as she now saw that there was nothing seedy about the mind, or the eyes, or the bearing of the man who had shoveled the snow from her sidewalk, and she wondered how she could help him.

When she handed him the envelope she had meant to say a few words of the sympathy with which her generous heart was filled, and then dismiss him, but she found herself talking to a man who interested her, and, with swift feminine intuition, she knew that the pleasure of these moments did not spring solely from a feeling of compassion for the man who was but a moment ago hungry and cold. Catherine was puzzled, because she could not place John; she felt sure that he was not a laborer, and he certainly was not in the least like any of the young men she knew, as he had not uttered, "Jolly cold night," or any other inane phrase, nor had he appealed to her heart by either word or look.

The man met her searching eyes and, divining her mental query, remarked, "I'm a mechanic, and have just arrived in New York after a year's absence"; and with a smile he added, "I shall have plenty to do to-morrow."

"A mechanic! How very interesting!" she cried. "Please sit down." Then, acting upon an irresistible impulse, she added, "I'll have dinner served in here, as it's so cozy and warm."

With a delicious feeling of rest and comfort, John

sank into a deep chair and, looking again at the portrait of Lurgan over the fireplace, he smiled once more.

It was a merry little dinner for Catherine. For the first time in her life she had met a man who, assuming to be only a fashioner of iron, talked better and was more interesting than any other person she ever had known. But what she liked best was his laugh — it was so rich and boyish. Looking at him with growing interest in her eyes, she exclaimed, "And you were brought up on the East side, and never have lived anywhere else?"

Without appearing to wish to invite sympathy by his voice, John replied, "My parents died when I was eight years old. Up to that time I had lived in the country, and after that, my uncle brought me to his model-shop on the East side and I have lived there ever since, save this year, which I have spent in Minneapolis."

Catherine, who was looking into the fire, her chin resting on her laced hands, felt a contraction of her heart at these words, and, after a pause, she said softly, "My name is Catherine Lurgan."

There was such an obvious request in this announcement that her companion replied, "And mine is John Worth."

Catherine did not move nor did she drop her eyes, which were fixed on the fire; she sat as before, with unchanged countenance. John thought the name conveyed nothing to her and idly studied her profile. But Catherine knew that name; her heart gave one quick throb and for a moment she thought she must cry out, as she repeated, inaudibly, "John Worth! John Worth!"

So this was the man whom her father and others were trying to drive into the earth; she had often wondered

what manner of man he was, who had drawn from her parent such violent abuse. And here he was sitting by her side like any other man, and yet he was not a type, but rather something abnormal and not to be classified. Her thoughts went back four years, to the time when she was eighteen years old. She had then attended a dinner at which Mr. and Mrs. Hodges were present, and the conversation had turned on John Worth and his invention. From that time she had heard the name of John Worth almost every day, and always he had been branded as a scoundrel and blackguard of the worst type.

Only three days before, as she had entered her father's dining-room, she had heard a threat, the remembrance of which now filled her with fear. Hodges had said, "We must get rid of him before the case comes up before the Supreme Court." She had heard no more, except an exclamation of protest from her father, for the two men had stopped talking on her entrance.

Then Catherine's mind turned to the trial in Minnesota, which the papers had reported in full, and she remembered her sympathy for the man who was fighting such great odds alone. She recalled the leading articles describing the man who had argued his own case, and certain phrases came back to her: "He is as hard as the steel of which he speaks." "Worth muddled all the lawyers on mechanics as easily as a schoolmaster could muddle a boy of eight." Again she mentally reviewed his whole history and that of his forebears, as it had come to her ears. John Worth had been thoroughly discussed and abused before this girl, and she ought to have dismissed him at once; but she was Lurgan's daughter, which meant that she had a will of her own.

Presently she peeped at John from the corner of her

eyes and, smiling roguishly, said, "You have certainly succeeded in making a great deal of trouble."

John then realized that she recognized him and, throwing his hands out toward the fire as if to warm them, but in reality to get more into her line of sight, so that he might see her eyes, he answered, "I am no doubt a trouble."

He had not yet caught her eyes, for she was gazing at his strong, knuckled hands and the powerful wrists and forearm, which were thrown into view by his position. She thought that she understood the reason why "driving this man into the ground," Mr. Hodges' favorite expression, was so difficult, and then she said, musingly, "Aren't you afraid some one will do you an injury, and wouldn't it be better for you to join my father's company and so secure the reward that is your due?"

To John this sounded like a lecture, but it was not intended as such, for Catherine was thinking only of John's welfare and of her own peace at home. Since this steel patent had presented itself to her parent as a possible death warrant to his hugely watered company, he had not been the father that she had always known and loved; and now she looked at John, awaiting his answer. Gazing so deep into her eyes that she trembled, he said, "Would you give me your honor?"

"Why do you say that?" she stammered.

"To bring home to you the absolute impossibility for me to enter your father's company, or to accept any reward from him."

Suddenly he rose and, holding out his hand, said, "Will you take my hand? And shall we not say good night?"

But he did not know Lurgan's daughter, for she ex-

claimed, "Oh, but you are not going now, not until you have built up the fire and told me some more about the East side, and" — seeing the still outstretched hand — "I forgive you for those strong words, but only on condition that you forget my suggestion, for I had no right to speak as I did."

John held the little hand in his for a moment and, smiling into her eyes, answered, "You are satisfying in two ways, and here's to the fire and good cheer!"

"Come," she exclaimed gaily, "I must know, being a woman, what two particular brain cells I fill so satisfactorily."

"First my thought of you as a woman, and then my sense of beauty as a picture," said John, laughing.

Catherine blushed and curtsied, and he added, "That salutation completes the gracious vision. But tell me how you accomplish that feat. I have read of the curtsy and have often wondered how it was managed. Isn't it difficult?"

"I'll show you some day — when we are friends," said Catherine, with a mischievous smile.

"I wonder," said John, looking at her keenly, "what that phrase really means. Is it to be merely a question of time, or is it time and" —

He paused, but Catherine said, "Come! Come! Why hesitate over a word?" Approaching close to him she smiled up into his eyes, with an expression that said, "Finish!" He looked at her again, in the way that had made her tremble, and he said slowly and pointedly — "Affection!"

She did not understand why the word thrilled her, but suddenly she felt a little afraid of this impelling man, so she said, "I am going to send you home now, but first

I'll get you a scarf or something to keep you warm, for it must be bitterly cold."

"Please don't!" said John. "The night, no matter how cold it is, won't chill me now."

But his hostess left the room, and shortly returned with a plaid shawl. John exclaimed, with a smile, "If I go to the East side with that about my neck, I shall certainly be held up."

Catherine only smiled sweetly at him and said, "You must obey me! See! I have brought a pin and I am going to fasten the shawl properly. And if you are a good boy — very good, mind! — and wear it to your hotel, I'll permit you to bring it back to me."

"In that case you may muffle me up to the eyes, but not beyond, as I want to add another picture to my gallery."

Catherine would not look into his eyes, but fastened the scarf around his neck, and John, taking her hand, raised it to his lips and departed.

From a darkened window across the hall she watched him as he walked down the street, and then slowly she went upstairs to her room, and, after her maid had prepared her for bed, she knelt and prayed to her mother for guidance, not understanding the strange sweetness that filled her being.

John walked over to the East side and, opening the envelope, he found twenty dollars. Recalling his lovely hostess, he smiled at the beautiful picture in his mind. It was a picture that should have filled his heart as well, but the painting over the fireplace had prevented his becoming intoxicated by Catherine's great beauty. He had seen, when the frightened look came into her eyes as he spoke so pointedly of her honor, a chance to

injure Lurgan, for he knew, as did the rest of the world, of the financier's great love for his child. And when he saw her tremble beneath his gaze, he, too, had felt the passion of the moment.

John smiled bitterly at the situation, and well he might, for greater extremes, in a worldly sense, could hardly be brought together. Lurgan's daughter was not only one of the wealthiest heiresses in the world, but extremely handsome as well.

Catherine had blue-black hair, eyes so dark that they looked black, an exquisite chin and beautiful teeth; her figure was tall and sensuously proportioned. The phrase is peculiarly applicable, for every line and every curve revealed her seductive charm. She was the embodiment of love and life, so much so that men called her the sorceress of the senses; she was a woman for whom a man would sell his honor, but her proud, imperious soul was still looking for its natural mate. Should she wed her true master and the lord of her soul, she would become a mother, an embodiment of all things beautiful. If, on the other hand, she were to give her hand without her heart, she would be likely to nourish his being with the measured drops of other men's souls. Owing to her peculiar upbringing, for she had always been with her strong, virile father, the girl did not yet realize her fascination or her power of allurement. Lurgan guarded her always with the notion that a strict surveillance and his own love were all that his child needed; and at the age of twenty-two, or previous to the meeting with John, she did not know the depth of her own nature and had but little knowledge of men.

She had spent three months in Europe every summer with her father, and, as he was one of the powerful men

of the world, she had been presented at many courts and had attended many functions of court life. Her radiant beauty had appealed to many men of title, and to others, but they had rapped at her father's door only to be sent away, for Lurgan, with all his faults, would not barter his daughter. He realized that she must be consulted when her future became the issue, for, as a manager of many enterprises, and of thousands of men, he often paid his daughter compliments on her management of his large household. There was no friction, and everything was done properly. This knack of management bespoke the fact that his daughter had an admirable head for the fulfilment of any duty. Her manner was the perfection of gentleness and curtsy, and she never had the slightest trouble with servants. As a matter of fact, they all loved her, and, with her, took an interest in making her household a well-organized institution, so that when her father entered his door he always realized the blessing of a perfectly ordered home.

Lurgan was at his club, entertaining a personage of distinguished title, who was visiting the United States, it was reported, in order to study the country, but the real reason for his visit was to see the country's greatest heiress. Lurgan knew this on receiving a call from a wily ambassador of the great lord, but, though flattered, for he was well pleased that the great ones of the earth should pay court to his daughter, he only said, "Let's look him over."

So his Grace with a pointed beard came to see one of the leaders in this country of progress; and Lurgan liked him. The next morning at breakfast he told Catherine all about him, and then said, "We'll have a big dinner, sweet, next week. I'll bring you the list to-night, but his

Grace will come home with me for a cup of tea to-morrow afternoon."

Catherine smiled, saying to herself, "I hope this one will be interesting, and will not say, 'Beastly weather, eh?'" But thoughts of sounding titles, and of herself as being "on view," did not trouble her pretty head this morning, for she was conjuring up a vivid picture of her interesting "snow man."

CHAPTER X

JOHN WORTH GIVES AND TAKES

THE next morning John was thinking about Catherine and recalling the picture she had presented, as he walked past Lurgan's bank to see King, who had written to the East side library, asking him to call as soon as he arrived in town. King expressed himself as being very anxious to begin operations. For as he grasped John's hand he said, "Riddell has everything ready for you, and now let us make up for lost time. I congratulate you on beating Steel. Can they delay you much now?"

"It's hard to bamboozle the Supreme Court," John replied.

"That's so. And now let me say that through you, in the past two years, I have doubled my fortune, and also remember that I am old enough to be your father, which is also stating that I like you and the way you make good. Now, in this room, 'Steel' offered you twelve thousand dollars a year, and I want you, beginning from to-day, to draw one thousand dollars a month until the factory is on its legs and earning money. I think this is only just to you and to the machine, as you can't give 'The King' your time if you have to earn living wage as well. Do you see my point?"

"I do, and you are right; but that was not our arrangement."

"Quite so, but it is the only arrangement that I'll

stand for now, because it's sense and it's business as well. From my knowledge of those men's power and influence, I didn't believe that you would ever succeed in making the patents good, so I made very hard terms, perhaps. But now things are different, and I'm ready to cut the liver out of their printing-machine business if I can."

Seeing a new side to King, John replied, "All right, and I'll begin at once. Now what about expenses for tools and so forth, and working capital?"

Going to his desk, King filled out a check and handed it to John. "When you have used that up, come for more."

John looked at the check with wide-open eyes, and cried, "This ought to see us through."

"Don't bother me with details; I trust you fully."

With eyes a little moist, John thanked King, and after a moment said, "I'm rather short on clothes. Do you mind giving me a line to your tailor?"

King, smiling, wrote an address on a slip of paper. "I'll have telephoned before you arrive at this address." And when John had gone, King made it quite clear to his tailor what Mr. Worth really wanted, and finished by saying, "Mind, don't limit his order, but work on the one I have given you and see that the work is put in hand at once."

After John's visit to the bank and the tailor, he crossed over to the East side, as he was eager to see his friends. He first called on Dr. Sawyer, who, after welcoming him back, said, "Willie Radley has lost his position; he made a speech about you the night you won your lawsuit in Minnesota, and, unfortunately, what he said was funny, and a reporter gave him a column, and the following day Willie was discharged."

"That's too bad."

"It is especially so," cried the minister, "because since his father's death he is supporting his mother and sisters."

And when John met Willie he took his arm and told him to come for a call on King. Willie replied, with a laugh, "From the ranks of the unemployed I hasten," and shortly afterward they were in King's office, and John was telling a story that brought blushes to Willie's cheeks.

"Why spoil his talents there," demanded the old man, "as we can get book-keepers in large quantities? You tell me that Mr. Radley made the East side bank, and that it had a very large list of depositors. Why not start a small private bank and see what your friend can do?"

John, very much surprised, declared that Willie could make it pay, of course.

"Let us see," went on King, in his velvety voice, as Willie, losing his surprise quickly, and becoming a banker, asserted that there was a lot of money in the venture.

"I hope so. At any rate, I have always wanted a bank."

The following day, when Willie called to say that he had found modest quarters, King asked, "Who is the greatest man in your section?"

"John Worth."

"Well, then, call your financial institution 'The John Worth Bank.' But don't tell him this, as I want to surprise him. You see he called a machine after me, and I like the idea of this return compliment."

Willie went home the happiest man on the East side. King, besides offering him a handsome salary, had promised him an interest in the bank, if it should prove a paying investment. When he saw his mother and sisters, he lifted his head high in the air and, inflating his chest,

pretended that he did not know them. But they soon forced him to abandon his grand airs, and the entire family rejoiced in his roseate prospects.

When John saw the sign on the window, and realized that a part of the bank belonged to him, he bent his whole energies toward working for a large list of depositors. He said to Willie that they must not rest until it was the most powerful bank in New York. Willie assented cheerfully, and then, in choice East side vernacular, complimented John upon his clothes.

Early that afternoon, having stopped at his rooms for the shawl, John went up town to call on Catherine. He asked the butler, who recognized him, if Miss Lurgan were at home, and after receiving word that she was, he was taken upstairs to the drawing-room. The butler then asked what name he should give.

“Mr. Snowman.”

The butler departed and when he had found his mistress, he said, “Mr. Snowman is in the drawing-room, Miss.”

By her beating heart Catherine knew who it was and said, “Bring him here.” John was escorted through three large reception-rooms to another and smaller room on the same floor. This was Catherine’s office, and from it she managed her large charities and her house accounts.

There was a happy expression on Catherine’s face as she waited for John, and when he entered she gave her hand, saying, “I am so glad to see you, Mr. Snowman.” But as he approached, Catherine’s eyes noted the change of appearance, and making a low, sweeping curtsy, she cried, “My! But we have altered.”

“Am I not splendid? I wasn’t altogether sure that I would come, as these rags make me proud and haughty.

But yes, I'll talk and be democratic and all that, so don't get nervous."

Catherine, laughing with John, exclaimed, "I'm so glad; but how did it all happen?" And when John told her, she said, "I know Mr. King and like him, but he hasn't been to see us for two years."

"Say," announced John, assuming a long, tragic face, "I forgot the pin."

"How could you?" she cried seriously.

"I attached it to the black alpaca, which I called in last week, and forgot it to-day."

She liked his humorous way of putting things and, being more child than woman, entered into the play of words, and for a half hour they talked as boy and girl. But time was passing, and Catherine knew that her father, Title, and many others were coming in for tea, so, looking at a little watch, she said, "I am going to send you away now, as I must change my frock and receive all sorts of people, including a small nobleman with a large title."

"I have read of that person," and looking at Catherine so she blushed, he added, "Isn't he here to look over our industries — and such?"

"You are real mean," cried Catherine. "You must go now," and she pretended to be hurt at his allusion.

Approaching her, and looking straight into her eyes he said, "I'm sorry, believe me."

A few days after the shawl had been delivered, John picked up the pin from his dressing-table, and with it he journeyed to Madison Avenue. The butler opened the door of the morning-room and said, "Mr. Snowman, Miss." Catherine, who was talking to her dear friend, Polly Platt, blushed furiously and then turned very pale.

Then she said, in a voice that sounded queer to Polly, "Show him in here." Polly, who was a petite blonde, and very attractive, looked with interest in her gray eyes at the man whose name had made her friend blush. Thinking that she saw a slight diffidence in Catherine's manner, and being a wise little girl, Polly immediately remembered a number of pressing engagements, and having taken a liking to Mr. Snowman, she said amiably, "I hope we may meet again."

"How is your brother?" asked John. "I knew him at Columbia."

Polly exclaimed smilingly, "Oh, then you must call to see him, as he loves to talk college."

When she had gone, John said, "Here is the pin — and how are we, Title, and the others — the all sorts, I mean? Of course, I know Polly Platt doesn't come in on the 'all sorts' as the environing traditions, mainly exclusive, that have been built around you, don't extend to her."

"And how do you know about Polly, if I may ask?"

"As I read the social court calendar, I know that one Catherine Lurgan and Polly Platt are becoming great friends. It is narrated, also, that Miss Platt, from early childhood, until recently has lived in Paris, and I gathered from the same article that you danced at her house last night, and wore, besides a dreamy smile—I am quoting from the papers—a white frock and pearls." And Catherine, who had been just a bit vexed with her insistent snow man, laughed; and then looking into her eyes he continued, "Will you add to my pictures by dressing in white for me sometime?"

"How can I, as this is your last call?" And picking up the pin and holding it out before him, she cried, "Everything is delivered now."

"If I had only known —"

"Known what?"

And John soberly said, "I could have had so many things that night. I'm stupid."

Seeing that Miss Lurgan, as that was the name she took in his thoughts, was troubled to-day about something, John bade her good-by and said nothing about calling, and this piqued her. She sat for a long time thinking about her fascinating snow man, realizing that she had not been quite friendly. She did not like her words about its being his last call; as she repeated them, they sounded rather peremptory. She had made up her mind, if she ever met him again, to be very pleasant, but to put him in his place. As Lurgan's daughter she could not make a friend of a mechanic, no matter how interesting he might be; but her thoughts would not fit into a working arrangement with her feelings, and she was greatly troubled.

It was only yesterday, in response to a question from her father about Title, that she had said, "Oh, he doesn't interest me." And when he pronounced the perpetual "Why?" seeing John's stalwart form in her mind's eye, she exclaimed rather strongly, "He lacks manliness, ruggedness, and power."

Catherine now shaped a thought in her mind and looked at it as her father would have looked at a prospectus. Keeping her position, which she had never thought much about, immediately before her, it was not so very terrible after all, for her mind was running on Title. Filling in the details, she saw the old world and its gaieties; the many opportunities to clothe herself in fine raiment at court festivals, house parties, dances, and all the other pleasurable affairs that

revolve around royalty. Many of her friends were already there and all pronounced it beautiful and very satisfying, and against this was — and she put her hands over her eyes to shut out the picture of a man piling a log or two in her fire. She saw the bent form and the great ropes of muscle that sprang into the back and then sank out of sight as he straightened. Still communing with herself, she realized that if John Worth had not come into her life, it would not be so hard to say yes to Title. She felt that her father expected her to say that little word, though she knew that he would not coerce her. But there were other forces now at work in Catherine, and that afternoon she made up her mind to marry Title and end her short, sweet dream, for, of her liking for John she was well aware. But how deep that was she did not know.

Eager to hear something about Mr. Snowman, as her brother did not remember him, Polly called early the next day and cried, "Who is he? Come, confess."

"I met him and asked him to call," answered Catherine. "It's all prosaic and let us talk about something interesting."

"Oh, Catherine, don't get cross—I thought him so good-looking and nice, even though Percy was sure he didn't know him. But if he is tabooed, why let us try the weather; that's always safe."

"I'm sorry for my abruptness, Polly, but I have a shocking headache."

Turning to her friend, Polly saw that she was not looking quite well. Catherine, in order to find out if Polly had ever heard her brother speak of John, said, "I may go to Washington in the spring, as my father is interested in some big lawsuit against a man named Worth. Better come with us; it's sure to be interesting."

"Percy knows Mr. Worth," and then Polly continued very firmly; "he likes him ever so much."

"You needn't put it that way," protested Catherine, crossly.

"I'll come back some day when your head doesn't ache, dear," and Polly, considerably vexed, rose to go.

But Catherine put her arms around her and began to weep hysterically, so Polly was immediately all loving attention. When Catherine was quieted, she said, "Suppose I play something."

Catherine murmured, "Yes, do. Sing Douglas." Polly played some of the airs that Catherine liked, and then sang the song for which she had asked. In the morning, Polly found her apparently quite herself again.

"I was such a goose, Polly. Do sit down and let us have a good long chat about your big dinner-party and everything."

"Are you coming?"

"Of course. I told father that it was young people only, and because it was at your mother's, he said all right. Now what are you going to wear?"

The girls talked as girls will, and Polly went home, assured that Catherine was well physically, but suspected that she was still thinking about the tall stranger. Finding her brother at home for lunch, and her mother away, she said: "It's odd, Percy, that you do not remember Mr. Snowman, as I have never seen so noticeable a man."

Upon having him described in detail, Percy said, "Your description is very much like — but wait a moment." As Percy Platt had studied a little art in Paris, to engage his time and inclinations, he quickly drew a picture with his pencil and said, "Is that like him?"

"Why that is Mr. Snowman; so you know him after all?" cried Polly.

"Polly, that is John Worth."

"Brother, it's impossible."

"And yet this is the man you saw?"

"Oh, Percy, something is wrong somewhere, as she can't know Worth. Why, her father hates the ground he walks on"; and then another thought coming to Polly, she cried, "Suppose it is Worth? He is then deceiving her. I shall telephone at once."

"Don't be silly, Polly. I know that John Worth would not deceive her. Take my word for it, she knows."

"But how could they ever have come together? Their worlds are so far apart."

"I can't answer that, and I do admit a strange situation; but look here, sister, don't make any class error with Worth, or I'll get unpleasant."

"Was that fight so important?" asked Polly, archly.

"Not the fight, little sister, for I was raw and green then, but when he saved me from a gang of ruffians; knowing that he was a mechanic from Center Street, I offered him help financially. It was his answer that made me remember him."

"And that was —"

"'I wouldn't have believed you capable of this.' Just those quiet words, but they sank deep into my heart, so deep that I have never forgotten them, or him, for he then put me on to the road that men travel."

"Then you sent him a check?"

"Yes, sister, to my utter confusion. I was a bounder."

"Oh, Percy!"

"That's just the word, little sister, and since then I have tried to be what he is — a gentleman."

"But I am so worried about Catherine — for I know — I know —"

"That she loves him," added Percy.

But Polly would not admit that even to her brother, and she said, "Why haven't you hunted him up?"

"I will one of these days, and try again to get him to forgive me."

"And does he harbor you ill-will?"

"I think he merely despises me."

CHAPTER XI

THE SURRENDER

By following the papers closely, John found that Miss Platt was at home on Wednesdays and so he ventured to call, and was made very welcome by Percy Platt, who said to a large, handsome woman, "Mother, this is my friend, Mr. Snowman." John told him afterward that that would not do, as he rather liked the name of Worth.

"But it must be 'Snowman,' as this function, though small, carries at least two women who sell news to the papers, and I allow your own mind to dwell on the explosion in Wall Street, if it were known down there that—" and then Percy, looking at Miss Lurgan, said no more.

Presently, John found a vacant seat beside Catherine, and, slipping into it, said, "I shall have a box at the opera next Thursday," and Catherine, who understood, smiled and said airily:

"But I am not going to speak to you after to-day."

"So I must do all the talking? That's selfish."

"I mean that I am not going to see you," and she looked at him very firmly.

"Bet you an orange against a cookie that I see you and talk to you within three days."

"I'll take that bet, but you mustn't deliver the orange in person, if you lose," and Catherine looked at John with big, wide eyes, as he laughingly consented, saying that if he won he should come for the cookie.

"But you won't win, I know."

And turning the conversation, John said, "May I speak about the picture?" and without waiting for an answer, went on, "Your gown is perfect, and I like that ruffle around your neck, and your hat, and I like your eyes, when they don't wander."

A little flush gathered in Catherine's cheek, but she kept her eyes turned away because she was afraid of the light which she realized was in them. To her relief, Mrs. Platt joined them, and John soon bade his hostess adieu. Turning to Catherine, and bending over, he whispered, "Wear white"; and when she looked again, Polly and Percy were escorting him to the door. But what did "wear white" mean?

She was plainly mystified, until Polly came in and said, "Dicky Baldwin has the grippe and can't dine with us, so mother asked Mr. Snowman and he was good enough to say that he would come."

Catherine now knew the import of John's parting request, and she told herself that she was displeased with him.

Later Polly said to her brother, "Yes, I like him very much, and he is what you say, a gentleman."

"If I were a real artist, Polly, I would paint him as a symbol of religion."

"Percy, you dream!"

"I have imagination, perhaps, and following this crook in my character, I have already arranged with mother for a dinner of small tables — Catherine, Title, you, and John together. Then I'll watch the play; of course, Catherine will follow the others to Europe, but still I am making a fight for an American."

As she dressed for the dinner, Catherine was positive

that she would not wear white, and she had her maid bring out for inspection a number of dinner gowns of other colors, but none pleased, and finally the maid said, "But, mademoiselle, this is so chic! I can't understand why you don't like it. It makes you look so charming."

"Very well, if you really think I ought to wear it. But no, I won't wear pearls — just this frock, with a rose in my hair." And Catherine said to herself, "I didn't put it on for him, of course, and he is a silly if he thinks so." But she was very happy as she drove to the Platts, and once laughed as she wondered what John would say. Then she whispered to the shadows, "He may say what he likes to-night, and he may look at me, too, in that way he has of telling me that he wants to kiss his picture. Oh — oh, John, but you are so shocking," and Catherine blushed in the brougham.

The arrangements for dinner were pleasing, for Title and John at the same table meant that joy would be the portion of the hours that she had taken from duty and given to her heart. Her father had said that day, "I want to see you settled, dear, and Title is very much of a man; he told me that he had already grown to love you dearly." She had answered that she wished more time, and the banker, seeing the change in his daughter's words as to Title, told her not to decide until she was ready to do so. But Catherine had finally made up her mind to marry the nobleman and, having set her future at rest, she allowed her heart full sway to-night.

Her eyes drank in their full of the man she loved, and her heart was throbbing intense pleasure. For had not John said, when they were a moment together, "You are exquisite — a rose within my life — a morsel to devour, or a nightmare to haunt? When I call for my

cookie, I'll bring shackles to take you away from the eyes of all men." And now at the table, listening to the amiable Title, she was thinking of the look in John's eyes, when he had spoken to her in the drawing-room, and was vaguely wondering if it would be wrong to see him again in her own home.

While she was conjuring up a scene for the future with John, by that art known only to women, she was listening to what Title was saying. But she was recalled from her dream by the nobleman who was describing Pittsburg, where he had just been. Finding Miss Lurgan so interested, he was giving in detail the account of his two days there.

"All they talk about is Worth, which in Pittsburg is a synonym for steel," and at that name the smile on her face deepened, and the spell that held her broke, and she asked Title to tell something about this colossus. Then she looked mischievously at John, who, turning to Polly, said in a low voice, "If it gets rough, stop him." But Polly only smiled back and cried to Title, "Oh, do tell us something about the man who is now occupying the stage."

"By Jove," began Title, "they do give it to him; that's what. They pour it on as thick as you like. Why, they stop discussing whisky at the Monongahela Club to talk Worth. Really, I couldn't begin to tell you all the things, they said, but 'rascal, rogue, thief,' will give you the gist of opinion. I was shown about, you know, by Mr. Hodges, whose vocabulary on Worth seemed more comprehensive than the others. He's a bird, if you like," laughed Title.

"Why a bird?" demanded Polly, in glee.

"Oh, he told me that his face was jammed by a steel

beam which dropped the wrong way. I don't know why he told me that, except that it was late and we had stopped his invective many times to call for whiskies. But I learned the next day that the jamming was done by one David Worth, uncle to John Worth. Really, you know, I somehow like this fellow that every one abuses."

Polly and Catherine enjoyed the situation hugely, and John saw in their eyes, in their laugh, and in their manner, that all these ugly names took no shape in their minds or their hearts. With deep feeling he saw that his honor as a man stood clear and strong to these girls, and soon he, too, was laughing at the terrible things which were said about him.

The dinner was a merry one, and Catherine enjoyed every moment of the blissful freedom that she had allowed herself. After dinner she and John were escorted to Percy's study to see a sketch of Polly, and while it was being admired, Platt said, "Excuse me for a moment, and I'll fetch something which may interest you, that I picked up at Christy's."

After the door closed, John said, "He is a patriot."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because he left us here. I can see he nourishes a hope that you may not go to England." And after a pause, John added, "I think he would be glad if you remained in America."

Catherine trembled at these words and sat down. Pulling a chair close up to her he said, "I want to marry my picture."

With her face very pale, Catherine answered in a hushed voice, "I can't, John."

Lifting her chin with one of his hands, so that he could look into her eyes, he replied in a low, powerful voice,

"I mean to marry you, Catherine, unless you think I can't make you happy?"

"John! John! You know I can't — can't," she cried, jumping to her feet.

John took her hands and, putting them on his shoulders, drew her to him. He kissed her on the lips, and in a voice that wavered with the intensity of her love, she whispered, "Please don't." He kissed her again and then she linked her hands about his neck and said softly, "I love you, John, but I can't marry you. I am going to marry Title. Father wants me to."

At the mention of Lurgan's name, with a grim thought in his mind, John asked, "What night shall I call for my wager?"

His arm was still about her, her heaving form against his, as he kissed her again. A moment later he cried, "Give me one evening at your home. I hear Platt coming."

"Come Tuesday afternoon at half-past four."

When Platt came in, after looking at Catherine, he took a painting from its wrapper and began showing her all its excellent points. He talked rapidly for quite a while, for he was a good fellow and a man of the world, and he was giving the girl time to regain her poise. At last Polly came to tell Catherine of the arrival of her carriage. Looking at John, her soul in her eyes, Catherine said, "*Au revoir.*"

John walked over to her and said gently, "You will be free then?"

Understanding his meaning, and making a little curtsy that was infinitely pleasing, she whispered, "Yes."

Polly laughed at this scene, but Percy saw tragedy in the girl's manner and terrible determination in the man's,

and he thought that if Worth got only half a show he would win her.

On her way home Catherine was nestling back in a corner of the carriage, not trying to stay the flood of love that was rioting through her being. She felt again the exquisite pain of his first kiss. Then he had kissed her again and her being seemed to melt into his. The last embrace had submerged her soul with intense longing for a lasting grasp of his strong arms.

To her father, who was awaiting her, she said that she was sleepy, and went to her room still in that pleasurable thrall of the first kiss of love. In the morning she tried to summon cold reason, but her mind was too full of John, so she thought she would take another day. What did it matter? She sang and was happy, and the image grew dearer and more precious, and when she tried to arrange her life in its old orbit, she grew hot with shame that she had ever imagined Title as her husband.

At last, taking a firmer hold on reason, she found that John was hope, and that to him only did her being respond. Another life had come to Catherine; the old girlhood days had gone. She saw the emptiness of her life if she married Title, and the desolation of her father's home if she married John. And yet there was no more worry, no more loss of sleep; for her soul had passed to John when he kissed her, and beyond this she could not go. Had her passions been sapped with many kisses, she would have viewed life differently; from a lower level she could have fought a better battle with herself, but she was very pure and very honest, and that kiss meant more than the abandoning of her lips to a moment of ecstasy.

She did not then realize the depths of her nature other

than her knowledge that he could have taken her away from home, friends, everything! but the next day, and afterwards, John filled her vision. She could not mark one step of her life beyond him, because he had taken from her the restraint of girlhood, and her look into the future now held nothing beyond the man whom she loved so unrestrainedly.

When Tuesday came, knowing that her father had an engagement for dinner, and that she had many invitations out for a reception, she searched the telephone book for John's Jersey number, so as to ask him to come for dinner. But John was in New York and Catherine did not know where to find him, so when he came in the afternoon, she met him in the hall and said, "Come back at eight and dine with me. I'll ask Polly and her brother to join us."

CHAPTER XII

LURGAN LOSES

WHEN John passed out, Mr. and Mrs. Hodges were emerging from a house a little higher up the street on the opposite side where they had been making a call, and were now on their way to Lurgan's to meet Title. Hodges saw John come out of Lurgan's and greatly wondered. He hoped that the steel patent case was being adjusted, and with this in mind, he said to Slater, "Tell Mr. Lurgan that I should like to speak to him for a moment." When the butler replied that Mr. Lurgan was not home yet, Hodges was amazed.

After waiting a few moments, Catherine appeared and welcomed the Hodges, and then came others, among them Lurgan and Title. Hodges was in the meantime seeking for a reason which would explain Worth's presence, never once suspecting that his radiant hostess was in any way connected with the matter. He wondered if some underhand work were going on, but no, that could not be, for he had seen Lurgan come in afterwards and with him the foreigner. Still he thought he would speak to Playfellow before asking Lurgan to explain, and on his way home he dropped in on his partner, and recited what he had seen.

"Something is up," Playfellow said; "at any rate, give Lurgan a chance to explain." And, as Hodges was going to dine with Lurgan, he promised to speak with him that

evening. About ten o'clock he had an opportunity to do so.

But in the meantime John was in the morning room of Lurgan's home, enjoying his picture. Catherine was dressed in a simple gown of great beauty and John was glad that he had her all to himself, for Polly and her brother had remembered a previous dinner engagement and were prevented from coming.

"It will have to be years and years as father will never give his consent," said Catherine, shyly.

"Only days," asserted the youth, "as I have a little house all ready in Jersey."

"A house!" she exclaimed, and he continued, "Yes, it was my father's place once, and afterwards a ruin. King ordered it rebuilt and now all it needs is a little furniture — and you."

Catherine trembled and said, "It sounds heavenly, John, to be there with you alone. It's all so strange, and new, and beautiful. But how father will rage when he knows. You don't know how terrible he is at times, but of course he must be told."

"I'll tell him."

"You?" and she looked up with astonished eyes.

"Why, yes, of course; his anger won't disturb me. And I have also to say a few words such as — I want your daughter now."

Catherine laughed merrily and cried, "Oh, John — John."

Rising from his chair he went to Catherine and lifted her out of her seat. Then clasping the yielding form to him he whispered, "My Wife!" The girl put her arms around his neck, her heart thumping tumultuously, and he whispered, "Will you come with me to-night?"

She answered by patting his cheek and kissing him, realizing that the man was asking for his picture.

And into this scene strode Lurgan, awakening the girl from her ecstasy by shouting, "You low-down scoundrel!"

John, carefully lowering Catherine to a chair, in his imperturbable way, said to Lurgan, "Very glad you came in, as I want to talk to you about—" But he got no further, for Lurgan, wild with rage, picked up a chair and was swinging it to strike, when John caught his arm and, wrenching the chair from him, continued, "Take care, you are not now striking in the dark, and the light must be fearsome for such as you."

The words and their measured sarcasm made Lurgan cry, "What in hell do you mean? There's the door — go! How dare you come to my house and attempt my daughter's honor?"

"Father, just a minute, please. I love John and have promised to marry him."

"Marry him!" shrieked Lurgan, "I'd see you dead first. Don't you see that he is blackguard all through?"

"Oh, father, don't! The courts have said that the process is his, so why call him names? He doesn't merit abuse," protested Catherine, looking at her parent with flashing eyes.

"Do you dare contradict me?" and in his rage Lurgan pushed her away from him, and tripping on a footstool she fell heavily to the floor. John, very pale, tenderly picked her up and, carrying her into the hall, said, "Get your coat and hat and come with me." Catherine dumbly went upstairs and John walked back into the room where Lurgan was stalking up and down like an enraged bull.

"We are alone now for a minute as Catherine has gone upstairs for her hat and coat."

"Hat and coat," gasped Lurgan, "what for?"

"She is going with me to-night, of course."

"You damned impostor and thief!" Lurgan shrieked wildly, "but I'll see —"

"Stop right here until she comes down, as I am afraid that you may strike her again. And as she now belongs to me, another offense of that kind would make me violent."

Lurgan picked up the fire-tongs as if to hurl them at John, crying, "Get out of my way or I'll brain you."

"I like you better now, and, of course, I hope you will carry out your threat," John said slowly, "as I should like to squeeze that throat of yours the way my uncle squeezed the hired assassin of your partners."

"I had nothing to do with that," cried Lurgan, in a fury, but John saw that his shaft went home, and he went on in a voice like the snarl of an angry animal, "I mean to hurt you, Lurgan, as you have hurt me, and by God, if you so much as move this way I'll hold your head in that fire."

The banker saw that Worth meant what he said and remained where he was. Just then Catherine opened the door and told John that she was ready. Lurgan protested fiercely and swore that he would disinherit her, but with his angry words ringing in their ears, they went out into the night, the girl weeping quietly.

At Fourth Avenue they boarded a car and in half an hour got off in the central part of the East side. So far they had sat in silence, the girl thinking about her father, and the man about his beautiful picture.

When they turned into a gate, Catherine, looking up, said, "What place is this?"

"Dr. Sawyer's. His daughters will look after you until we are married."

Holding up her head, in a trembling voice Catherine said, "Let me kiss you, John."

When the minister came to the door, he noted with surprise that John had a lady with him. He invited them in, and when they were in the sitting-room and the doctor's daughters were making Miss Lurgan comfortable, John told the story of the evening, without the strong side-lights, and then he asked Dr. Sawyer if he would look after Miss Lurgan.

The Misses Sawyer, as in one voice cried, "Of course we will, and a wedding! How delightful."

Turning to John the doctor said, "I will do as you wish, and now, girls, off to bed, as Miss Lurgan must be tired."

When they had left the room the minister called up Lurgan by telephone and told him where his daughter was. This message raised a dead weight of fear that had been growing into Lurgan's vitals, for the morning-room contained a companion portrait to that of Lurgan, and it was of Catherine's sweet-faced mother. After the couple had left the house, this picture seemed to look at him accusingly, and he would have given worlds to recall the hot words that he had addressed to his daughter. Before the message came he was thinking that Worth's attentions toward Catherine could not be honorable, and this thought burned him like hot iron. He was just about to start a hunt for her, and now that he knew of her safety, he settled down for the night feeling certain that he could induce her to return the following day. He had told the doctor that he would call upon him early in the morning, and though he had desired to say more, Dr. Sawyer,

who did not like the way Lurgan had driven his young friend Worth from pillar to post, had hung up the receiver rather abruptly.

Turning to John, he said, "Now, my boy, I want a good clean talk with you about to-night's work. Are you treating that girl right? Before you answer, let me say something about my knowledge of your character. You grew under my eyes and, always liking you, I have followed with affectionate interest every step that you took. But I am bothered about you to-night, because I somehow see a terrible motive behind this act of yours. The only time I detected the brutal part of your nature was during the riot. Then I saw you naked, stripped to the animal within, and like a giant you brought order out of chaos. Then I saw your sufferings under the iron heel of Lurgan's company, and all these years I never heard you complain and, from my knowledge, I know you went hungry many a night. It was a time of heroic suffering, and I loved your heroism and your perseverance. Then your uncle was murdered and still you were patient and kept to the road — the straight road ahead."

And then the doctor with moist eyes said, "Are you on the straight road with this girl? I know what the world says and believes as to your relative positions, but under the roof of God, John, you are that girl's superior in every respect, and you know it. Now I see again the mad fight of the riot and your endless patience, and I know of your great talents, so tell me truly, John, are you hurting Lurgan through his daughter?"

"Yes."

Just that little word was spoken quietly, and the doctor said, "I'll perform the ceremony if she wants me to,

because I don't want to kill that last spark of manhood that compelled you to bring her here. But I am disappointed, and from now on I shall not speak to you, John, and this will hurt me more than it will you."

"Doctor, aren't you harsh?"

"Look, John; take that girl home in the morning, and shoot Lurgan if you wish. Then I'll take your hand; but to hurt that child, no — no — no," cried the minister, walking up and down the room.

"I'm sorry we part so. May I call in the morning?"

"Yes, John, call in the morning, but don't speak to me until your heart is cleansed."

Dr. Sawyer's daughters were waiting to hear of his talk with John, and, after he had explained, one cried, "Of course, father, if John doesn't love her, they can't get married. That's absurd."

The minister, with greater knowledge of the world, said, "John has grown hard, and if I refused to perform the ceremony I might strangle all thought of his mother and honor, and as that girl is with him willingly, I am going to tie her to him if she asks me to."

Early in the morning Lurgan called and asked for his daughter; he was shown into the doctor's study, and in a few minutes Catherine was saying pleasantly, "Good morning, father."

Lurgan looked long and searchingly at his daughter and answered, "Has he hurt you?"

It took Catherine a few seconds, together with the hard look in her father's eyes, to grasp his meaning. Then, cut to the soul, she became incensed and did not answer. She walked from the room and went upstairs.

Lurgan, still bitter and hostile, then asked for Dr. Sawyer, and when the minister came into the room he

said peremptorily, "I think this escapade has gone far enough, and I want my daughter."

"I talked with her this morning," the minister replied, "and, as well as I could, pointed out the seriousness of the step that she was taking. I even urged her to go home, but I was most careful to make her understand that I was a friend upon whom she could rely."

"And what did she say?"

"That she was going to marry John Worth."

"Impossible!" shouted Lurgan. "I won't have it! Have I nothing to say in the matter?"

"Why not go to her now and say, 'Come, daughter, and be married from home.'"

"Do you think I'm crazy?"

"I have made a perfectly sane suggestion to you, as neither you nor I have the authority or the power to stop them. The girl is willing, nay, anxious, to trust her future to the man, and that being the case, why not give the marriage, which is bound to take place, your sanction?"

"I'd see her dead first. I hate that low-down mechanic."

"Take care, Mr. Lurgan. I have argued with both against this marriage, especially with Worth, and he loses my esteem if he insists on the wedding taking place; but I don't like to hear him defamed by one of the men who have made him hard and relentless."

"Then he is marrying my daughter for revenge?"

The minister, drawing his tall form erect, in a vibrant voice exclaimed, "Yes; because you and others destroyed his uncle."

Lurgan's red face took on a deeper tinge as he cried, "I had nothing to do with that; I swear."

"Do you mean to stand there and tell me that that assassin killed a demented man for the pure joy of killing,

and that the sleuths who were hounding Worth to starvation were ghosts of his imagination and mine?"

"I admit knowing about the spies, but as to the other — well, I am not built that way."

"A beautiful distinction, surely," the doctor remarked, with a sneer. "You are willing enough, so you say, to kill a man's soul, but you wouldn't kill his body. I like the assassin best — seems more manly and straightforward."

"You don't understand business."

Doctor Sawyer said no more, but quietly and with bent head left the room.

On arriving at his home that night, Lurgan found a note from his daughter, and he tore the envelope with a beating heart; but it was not what he hoped, as it read, "I am to be married Monday morning at eleven o'clock in Dr. Sawyer's church. Do come and wish us both God speed." In his misery Lurgan groaned aloud, and later he heard the newsboys crying in shrill voices, "Lurgan's Daughter Marries The Mechanic." He knew then that nothing could prevent what to him was an awful catastrophe, and he made no further move. The next day, when he saw knots of men talking together, he realized that their topic was the coming wedding, and he bent his machine-like faculties upon his work. His friends remarked that he looked like an enraged bull, and a few felt sorry for him.

Even King, who had no reason to like the banker, felt a distinct sensation of pity for the stricken man, but he was very practical in his ideas of life, so he said to John who called to ask him to the wedding, "She is a very fine girl and I wish you both happiness. I'll go to the church, of course. Where do you go afterwards?"

"As I have business in Washington, we will go there for three days."

King noted the word business and the definite statement as to time and, going to his ticker, he smiled at it, and then demanded, "And then?"

"To that little house on the factory property in Jersey."

"John, I have known Catherine since she was a little tot, and if you don't mind, I should like to furnish that place as a wedding present," and after a few seconds he added, "for her."

"I am sure she would like that," John replied.

Something in these words, or rather in the way they were uttered, made King sorry that he had accentuated the wedding present as being purely for Catherine, so he said, "If you are not engaged at the parsonage to-morrow evening, come and dine with me at the Frontenac."

John, appreciating the compliment, said, "As I'm barred from the minister's and Catherine, I accept, with pleasure."

"Barred," echoed King.

John answered the unvoiced question by saying, "Dr. Sawyer thinks I am not doing the right thing by Miss Lurgan and has withdrawn his friendship —"

"And yet he marries you," broke in King.

"He is fearful that if he refused I might omit that detail." And now a note in John's voice made King glad that he had asked him to dinner. "I have given them two whole days to change the girl's mind, of course reserving the right of governing my own actions in case they should influence her against me."

King said softly, "That sounds very fair, but your words seem lacking in warmth. I'm thinking of the girl, not your courage."

"I measure everything *from now on* by cold reason," John laughingly exclaimed. "I have buried sentiment."

King, wishing to change the subject, for he did not like this side of John, said, "How is your patent case coming on?"

Again King saw another expression glide into John's face, a subtle change which he could not define.

Talking slowly, with the wonder of his mind in his words, John answered, "It's very odd, but there seems to be some impelling force shoving the suit forward in Washington as in Minnesota. But I'm not going to the capital on that account, as I received a letter from the President on my arrival in New York"—John did not say that it was congratulating him on winning his fight in Minnesota—"and he asked me to come to Washington on a business matter. He seems to possess gratitude, which is a quaint thing to find nowadays."

On Sunday, John dined with King, who had invited a few others, and the old man took pleasure in showing Worth to that section of New York that was damning him unmercifully. Soon it was known throughout the hotel who the guest of honor at King's table was, and the host was proud of the sensation that "*The Mechanic*" was making. That night John killed the last remnant of what is called suspicion in the mind of his business associate.

Catherine was devoting this evening to dreams, seemingly sure of the morrow of her life, for when the doctor, trying to be fair to John, said, "I am not sure that he loves you. I am not sure that his motive is not revenge on your father," the girl smiled sweetly, remembering only that little kiss which she gave John in the walk by the door, which was her way of thanking him for her honor.

Many flocked to the wedding, among them a number of Catherine's friends, but, of course, the great crowd was for the groom, their John, as he was called by the dense mass of people. To him and his bride were sent up cheer after cheer as they left the church for the train. And that evening they were in Washington alone, man and wife.

It did not add anything to Lurgan's love for John to read in his morning paper a few days later a long account of the dinner that the President's wife had given to the Worths. Nor did it add to his complacency to see the shadow that was growing between him and Playfellow. For "prayerful" was now exhorting God to deliver him from his weak friends, and the more he called on the Almighty, the more certain he was that Lurgan was weak, for had he not said in organ-like tones, when told of Catherine, "See my family, how obedient — how holy."

The banker, smiling grimly, saw that Playfellow and his "Man Friday," were planning ahead so as to make it easy to say, "It was through your fault that we lost the steel suit," and to avert possible disaster they tried to unload their stock on the public. But the public was waiting for the last word of the law of the land, and their eyes on this last word saw only the man who had married Lurgan's daughter, Catherine.

CHAPTER XIII

THE STEEL DECISION

"MR. WORTH, I sent for you because I want you to engage Harold Tyndale as counsel in your appeal against American Steel. I cannot now tell you why it will be best for you to do this, because I'm bound, and willingly so, to secrecy. I hope that you will rely upon my word when I state emphatically that your interests won't suffer by permitting Tyndale to address the Supreme Court judges. I may say that I have met this lawyer and like him, and you know, I am sure, that he is clever and a great orator."

The President ceased speaking, for he saw by a look on John's face that he was not altogether satisfied with the proposal. He then continued carefully, enunciating each word, "Tyndale did not make this proposal to me; it came from a legal, not a political source. Also remember that I have started an investigation into Oil and their methods, and don't forget the circumstances of Bachmann's death and that his wife was Harold Tyndale's sister."

Startled by the impressive manner of the President, John answered, "Very good, Mr. President, I'll engage Tyndale."

From the President's remarks, Worth felt that Tyndale was to head a force working through and with his patent suit, and he exclaimed, "Sister? How odd! I have

always had the impression that Bachmann was got at, but his suicide was queer, because it didn't fit the other part which I am sure he played. There is something wanting, as a void exists between his remarkable surrender to the trust and his suicide. I suppose Tyndale holds the key."

The President, seeing that Worth was reading causes well, answered: "Germans — and Bachmann was a German — do not possess by inheritance our easy way of assimilating new codes, new ideas, and new morals. When they have been in business as long as we have as a nation they will read success as many of our men read that word, and then they will have fewer Bachmanns and fewer suicides. But now that our business is finished, I may say that your abduction of Lurgan's daughter, for that is how the papers term it, pleases me hugely, and I again wish you all kinds of prosperity and happiness. *Au revoir* until this evening, when we are to have the pleasure of your company at dinner. Your wife and my daughter being old friends, we take pleasure in entertaining you both."

It was this dinner, a very elaborate affair, that hurt Lurgan, because the knowledge that his daughter had not dropped out of sight in marrying Worth, was then thrust home to him.

But that was only one of many entertainments that were given in their honor, for Catherine, free from leading strings and enjoying a liberty which in her case was not an abstract term, was learning that she possessed great power to attract in herself. And, loving her husband idolatrously, she nerved herself to effort and found it easy to remain not only America's first heiress, but one of its first women. Her visit to Washington was her

first independent touch at the world, for, after the dinner with the President, she became the fashion, not only in Washington but also in New York. But those who looked upon her husband only as an attachment to a beautiful woman were very soon made to see that her life was bound up in the man whom she called master.

She was, perhaps, the last word in the evolution of class, an actuality if not a phrase, more dear to the American than to the people of any other nation; the charm of her character was now being felt, and her great talents and beauty made it easy for her to keep the position to which birth as Lurgan's daughter entitled her.

Before they left Washington a wire from Willie read: "Get off at Newark; telegraph train." At Newark Willie met them and, with a luminous countenance, exclaimed, "I'm a committee of one to escort you to your house," and turning to Catherine he asked, "Have you been good?"

"Beautiful," she replied; "and I'm afraid — but may I call you Willie? It seems a great liberty, but really the name fits, if I may say so."

And Radley answered, "Of course; but" — and then he assumed a long face, saying, "You won't flirt with me, will you?" and Catherine, laughing heartily, exclaimed, "I won't, 'me' promise," and with those words, and her eyes full of pleasure, she won Willie's heart.

When Catherine was escorted to her home she found it a fairy place surrounded by trees, open country, and the factory in the distance. At home that night, in giving an account to his family, Willie said, "She's 'torobred' all through," and this remark traveled in the East side and Catherine was made holy thereby.

In two months Catherine, John, and King were again

in the capital, for the great appeal was on for hearing. Mrs. Worth listened to the argument step after step, day following day. She noted, in the court room of the Supreme Court, that her husband was not the man she knew. External appearances were the same so far as concerned manner and style, for he was as cool and easy as at the factory, but the mind that worked was different — so different that Catherine watched him with rapt attention.

He was continually giving hints in a low voice to Mr. Tyndale, and, although an enormous sum of money depended on the outcome of the appeal, he was so calm and unruffled that Catherine entirely lost her first feeling of anger at seeing arrayed against him and Mr. Tyndale many lawyers of national renown, for the Steel people were fighting for existence and had secured a number of the ablest men in the country to handle their case.

Turning to Mr. King in the afternoon session of the first day, Catherine said, "Is it possible that all the facts in this great case were welded together by John?"

"I am studying John, as well as the case," answered the old man of Wall Street, "and somehow it seems to me that the others are pawns in his hands and he is placing them to suit his own ends."

Catherine smiled and again gave her attention to the proceedings. Her interest did not flag as she, too, was studying this cold, cynical man who was her husband. It was her first introduction to the world of business, her first peep at war as an attachment of civilization, and she marveled that language contained so much power to hurt, for she felt keenly the shafts aimed at her husband. He, however, did not seem to mind and always smiled when some point was made against him, and often she

wondered why the opposing counsel did not become exasperated at Mr. Tyndale, but they, too, smiled in apparent enjoyment.

It was all queer and interesting, and she was really sorry when John said, "To-morrow will see it all over — even to arguments for and against." And John, who had grown to like his counsel, wondered what his closing argument would be.

After dinner Tyndale called, and when King rose to go to his room, the lawyer followed. When the two men were outside, Tyndale said, "I have some papers which I should like to show you to-night, and if you can spare me a moment I think I can promise to make you take the midnight train to New York."

King looked searchingly at Tyndale and answered, "I don't believe you can do that," but after he had read Bachmann's confession and the Hodges letters, he cried, "That's terrible. And you bring this out to-morrow?"

"I will try to do so, and I tell you to-night so that you may harass them in Wall Street. For the blood in this case is not going to make Worth's damages any less, nor is it going to help them in the eyes of the public."

In the morning John found a note from King stating that he had been called to New York on business of great importance.

When court opened the following day, Tyndale arose and gravely said: "If your Honors please, I desire to amend the record on appeal by inserting therein certain documents"; at the same time, amidst profound silence, producing his brother-in-law's and Hodges' letters. When he began reading them all eyes at once were turned upon Hodges whose face became very

pale, showing clearly the seams that David Worth's blows had made. The lawyers for the defense immediately objected strongly to the insertion in the record of the letters, and were sustained by the court. Tyndale, having created the effect he desired, cared, in fact, not one whit whether the letters became part of the record or not.

On his part, John now knew why the President had been so insistent, and he eagerly awaited his lawyer's closing speech, satisfied that he and his patent suit had merged into something much greater and grander than a point of law or a matter of simple equity. He remembered the President's words, "I am investigating Oil on my own account," and now he gave Tyndale his keen attention.

"From their annual reports," he was saying in cool, dispassionate tones, "and more especially the private report which they sent out broadcast after the New York Court of Appeals decided in their favor, you will observe that the Steel Trust has made from the Worth patent more than sixty-one million dollars. When they sent out the private report they felt certain that the case had been decided for all time, and so felt it was safe not only to give to the public a full account of the process which enabled them to strengthen their position by a large addition to their working capital, but also to state that hereafter they would never pay a less dividend than ten per cent on their common stock."

And Tyndale, looking at the judges, continued, "You can now estimate the business value, if I may put it that way, of the Worth patent. I think I have already shown you upon what flimsy legal grounds their case rests. Their own counsel, even, are clearly of my opinion in this,

otherwise they would not, in the New York suit as in Minnesota, and also here, have laid their chief stress on the good they have done with the process, and have taken pains to point out how terrible it would be for the working man if this patent were taken from them. That is an old device, as old as our laws themselves. These men who control American industries have proved to their own entire satisfaction that they are the anointed ones, and that they are robed with the Almighty's authority. Without them as vicars they endeavor to maintain that the social and moral fabrics of this country would crumble to hopeless ruin, and so when our poor laws stand in their way they resort to bribery. Think of that," cried Tyndale, in a hoarse, compelling voice, "they bribe, and by means of bribery they kill — as witness Judge Bachmann." Despite the clamorous objections of the lawyers for the defense he continued in a passionate voice: "They bought my brother-in-law for a million dollars, and he, mocked at and deserted by his partners in the crime, offered as a sacrifice the life they had desolated, and went to trial before his God. I have read you the letter he wrote to his wife, and as I have not Bachmann's sensitiveness, I have brought the whole transaction to the light. It is evident that the contract with Bachmann, though not in Hodges' hand, was practically written by him. Therefore I believe every word that he has written as to his visits to Playfellow and Hodges, and I give full credit to Hodges and Playfellow for the bribery of Judge Bachmann."

Turning to the judges he cried, "I ask you, for you have the power, to make those men pay the penalty of theft. I have proved that they appropriated the Worth

patents, and I ask you to remember that through the weakness of Bachmann they insulted the law of this country and arrogated to themselves a court of final jurisdiction. I beg you to remember also that there is blood on their hands. I solicit you to pay tribute to the man who worked his way to Minnesota that he might, in another circuit, get that which was lost to him by a conspiracy of bribery."

Tyndale sat down and there was a silence like that of a great forest, and in silence the crowd in court went their differing ways, all confident that Worth had won his suit and that the Steel Company would finally have to pay an enormous bill of damages.

John took his lawyer's hand and pressed it, saying, "I'm sorry for that which grieves you. I'm glad we are friends."

"I satisfied you then?"

"Very much"; and the men parted, as both were strong and hid their feelings, but both knew that time would bring them together again. But John's satisfaction was equaled by Hodges' discomfiture, for the latter was hissed as he left the court. He hurried to New York and in the morning called on Playfellow, that they might discuss matters on their way down town. He had read in the morning papers of King's sensational attack on Steel, and the business situation generally was bad from the point of view of his pocket, the only soul he possessed.

Playfellow decided that Lurgan must arrange matters with his son-in-law, and when he and Hodges called on the banker to point out his imperative duty, Lurgan did not like their methods and frankly told them so. In three weeks the Supreme Court rendered its decision, which was unreservedly in Worth's favor. The Steel

Company were ordered to stop at once all mills that were working the Worth invention. But this was as nothing to the enormous damages awarded the inventor, only one month being allowed in which to pay the vast sum. When Harold Tyndale read the decision he smiled and said to himself, "I am satisfied, for to-day."

The three men responsible for the great theft, as it was called, hurried to King's office only to be told that he could not do anything for them, and that Worth very likely would not treat with them. But they urged and urged for a meeting, and King finally arranged it. Speaking to Playfellow, Lurgan, and Hodges, John said, "I haven't any more to say now than I had when I last met you. I shall not sell nor shall I permit you to use my process; and if you don't pay the damages to the hour, I'll sell you out. I hope I have made myself clear."

King walked to the ticker, as was his habit, and laughed easily, liking the iron words and the iron manner. Playfellow, raising his eyes toward heaven, cried: "Oh, Lord, I beseech you to move this young man to the path of duty." Then King turned, startled, for he heard John say in a voice that made him shiver as from a cold blast of wind, "Stop that, you bloodsucker." Playfellow fell back in his chair as though stricken. Turning to Lurgan, John said, "I hear from Catherine that I was mistaken in thinking that you would descend to cold murder, and I harbor no ill-will as to your business methods. But to these two here," and John glared at Playfellow and Hodges, "I say that if ever again they raise the knife to me or mine, that I will cut their throats with no more compunction than I would crush the life out of a reptile."

In his smooth, even tone, for he did not like the way

John was looking at Hodges, King then said, "If Mr. Playfellow and his partner will be good enough to withdraw and not again intrude upon me, they will be laying me under a deep obligation." The two dazed men silently withdrew, it being the first time since they had grown to power that they had been ordered out of an office.

When they had gone, King cried, "Lurgan, shake hands with John."

Lurgan, in deep study, thinking of what Worth had said, jumped up and exclaimed, "Never in my life," and stalked out, banging the door.

King laughed. "He is coming around; I know him." After a moment's silence he continued, picking up a former conversation with John, "Why not buy a mill in Pittsburg?"

"None are modern enough and all are too far away; my scheme calls for a mill where the iron stone is."

"Do we build more than one?"

"Two; one south and one on Lake Superior."

"How is my machine getting on?"

"Bully; but why don't you come and see the shop?" asked John.

"All right, any day you say."

"To-morrow then, and Catherine will meet you at the station and show you about. I go West to-night."

CHAPTER XIV

WILLIE RADLEY ASSISTS

THE following day King saw the works in Jersey and noticed with keen delight the order, the method, and the great number of men employed. He was at last a producer, and joyously he said to Catherine, "I wonder if they have any orders yet?"

She looked surprised and exclaimed, "Hasn't John told you?"

"Not a word."

"This is real jolly; come to the office. Oh! I know every inch of the shop, and really, I believe I am getting mechanical; it's such fun coming here to see John and the others work!"

When King saw the books he cried, "Orders ahead for seven hundred! Isn't that great!" But what held his eye were the letter-heads, in the corner of which he saw in small letters, "James King — John Worth, Proprietors." And nothing in that day of pleasure equaled his delight at seeing his name there.

To Hadley, the foreman of the shop, he said, "How many machines are you making?"

"One thousand."

"Don't seem enough, eh, Mrs. Worth?"

"That's what I tell John."

"Do you suppose he would get cross and say things to me if I should order another thousand?"

"Why, I think he would be delighted to know that you took so much interest."

Then turning to Hadley, King gave him an order, which the foreman promised to execute at once.

King wondered what sort of an abode he was going to, as the fact of Catherine's living near the factory had always worried him. But when he was told that the house he saw in the distance was home, he felt relieved, and more so when he entered, for he never had seen a prettier place. The grounds, the lawn, and the trees, now growing into summer beauty, made King exclaim that it was a charming picture. He wondered if Catherine had yet discovered that John did not love her, for the old man was as fond of this dark beauty as if she were his own child. He hoped to read a thought or suggestion that would give him a lead, but Catherine gave no sign.

Shortly the world knew that King and Worth were building two immense steel mills. The individual mill owners included in the American Steel Company got together and called on King. He said to them, "If you reorganize and throw out Playfellow and Hodges, we may talk business. Dropping these men may be difficult, as Playfellow owns a large amount of your bonds, which he got for his ore-fields, and Hodges' steel mill gave him a big lot of bonds and Preferred." Then King added, "I'm afraid I am not holding out much hope, but frankly, I see only one way, and that is to wind up your company; and if you do that, we'll buy all your mills at inventory prices, and all your steamers and lands as well. That is, all except the lands originally owned by Playfellow and Hodges, or you may, as individuals, retain your mills; we will let you have our process for nothing."

The speaker for the mill owners looked with surprise at King and said, "I'm afraid I didn't get that right."

"I am merely quoting Mr. Worth, who is not seeking to hurt you," King said firmly, "though it may be necessary for him to do so in order to get at others. When we have sent your company to the wall, as we shall have to do, come back, and Worth, who is at all times and seasons a man of his word, will give you his process for one dollar a year rental. He will do this, but he will make with each of you one stipulation that will not in any way affect your business, or your prices, or your right to combine on prices, or to do anything and everything you damn please. This stipulation is that no one of you can sell his plant, or any part thereof, without first consulting Mr. Worth."

"In other words, you want to again establish a number of independent mills, each working out its own salvation, and for fairness all around you will let us have the process but we must not sell any part of our property to Hodges or Playfellow?"

"You have stated the case exactly."

"Say, Mr. King, Worth seems to be a good deal of a man, and you don't trail far behind in that respect. But your big mills will make it difficult for us."

"No, for when we have accomplished our purpose we stop making brittle steel. That will give you seventy per cent of the home market. We are going in for battleships, guns, foreign business, and so forth."

"Is that why you refused to sell the foreign patents?"

"It is."

"Worth must be a quaint character to refuse the colossal amount he was offered for the English rights alone."

"I don't always understand him," King confessed. "I am merely backing him and will do so to the last ditch, if necessary. He says that America ought to supply steel to the world, and you can't get him to see that he can ensure this by selling his patent. He calls it logic and, frankly, I like his method. You have perhaps read of that other little fight which Playfellow, Hodges, and Lurgan are waging against our printing-machines. They are now selling a thirty-one hundred dollar machine for three hundred and fifty dollars, but we hold to our original price of five hundred dollars and we are now making our fourth thousand. As our machine cost only one hundred and fifty dollars to build, I wanted to cut prices, but Worth said, 'What's the use? We hold the market and they are losing heavily.'

"I am trying to put Worth before you as he is, not as the creature that Playfellow and Hodges are trying to make him out in their paid newspaper crusade. It is due to his suggestion that we pay our workmen a royalty of one hundred dollars on every machine, over and above their wages. To insure good work he fines the shop one thousand dollars for each defective machine sent out. Needless to say, perhaps, that every type-caster that leaves our works is in perfect order, and I may also add that the men are the jolliest lot of workers I have ever seen."

After the mill owners had gone, King felt quite certain that they would move heaven and earth to free themselves. There was no such trouble as they imagined about separation, for Playfellow was anxious to get the Hodges mill separated from the others because, as a large owner and director of many railroads, he thought he could make it a very profitable investment. Before, or with, the final break with Lurgan and Steel, he wanted to

do the banker a serious and lasting injury, something that would blast his successful career; for he well knew that he could not control all the railroads if Lurgan were still active in the community, as the first banker in America.

Playfellow was a banker too, and his bank, the Unit National, was by all odds the largest in the city, outside of the Midland Bank which was more or less a private concern. Through this institution Playfellow had bought into other banks, so that through the Unit National he had a voice in all financial matters. Heretofore he had depended mainly on Lurgan for advice, as his own training, that of the subterranean passage and the dark booths, hardly fitted him for a business that must be conducted in the light. But now, with anger in his heart, he was eager to depose Lurgan from his high estate, thinking that by so doing he could forcibly assume control of the money market. He knew that Lurgan was terribly hit in Steel, for he himself was smarting under the loss of a lot of money and also a tremendous holding of Common and seven per cent Preferred, and his bonds would be worthless as well if the Steel Trust were not dissolved, for the company now needed every cent of its income for working capital. For the first time in his career, Playfellow was compelled to sell a large amount of gilt-edged railway stock to make good the losses that accrued while fighting Worth and King. And because Lurgan's daughter had married the arch scoundrel, he turned toward the banker with all the venom with which nature had so amply endowed him.

One Friday morning, after Playfellow had wound up the Steel Company, his lofty soul being in a prayerful mood, he called for Thomas Hodges and said, "The Lord tells me to punish that sinful man Lurgan, and to destroy

his power for future evil." And Hodges answered in a rising voice, "How can we break him?" Playfellow, quickly getting down to business, exclaimed, "He has lost a lot of money and a great deal of his prestige in Steel. If a way could be found to hurt his bank he would join the ranks of small jobbers and it's very important that he brings to the light his great holdings of railway securities so that our banks may get them."

"You mean to make a run on his bank then?"

"Yes," hissed Playfellow.

"How?"

"Listen! To-morrow, Saturday, at eleven, I will call in a few of our brokers to give them an extensive order to sell 'Midland.' Then you come in very much excited and, seeing the brokers, write me a note, whereat I am greatly disturbed. You then murmur a few words, which I make them promise not to repeat. I immediately call up our cashier by telephone and tell him to withdraw at once our account with Lurgan. You are to see that he doesn't quite understand, so that I have to talk sharply to him. After the brokers leave, and I'll keep them until twelve o'clock, I shall call up the railroads that we control, gas companies, and the other banks, and I shall speak to a number of people besides, telling them that Lurgan is shaky and advising them to withdraw their funds from his bank the first thing Monday morning. But my hope is in the brokers, for nearly all of them bank with him and their accounts are large, and they will withdraw their cash if we can frighten those that see me on Saturday. Now between Saturday and Monday morning we ought to create a stampede, and as no bank carries in cash more than a third of its deposits, we ought to have his shutters up by twelve o'clock.

"Of course we can't break Lurgan financially, as he holds too many first-class securities, but we can break his heart and his reputation by showing that he has lost the confidence of the people."

This little game to tarnish a man's reputation was put into effect and carried out in profound secrecy, and on Monday morning there were quite a number of men at the bank awaiting the opening of the doors. Lurgan, being down early, saw these, and saw also the pushing crowd as he entered the side entrance, and realized what it meant.

But he was now Lurgan the banker and he took prompt measures to pay all those that presented checks. His cashier was ordered to pay only from one window and have some one send for a squad of policemen to form a line.

Another saw the crowd, and that was King on his way to Wall Street. Questioning a broker whom he knew, he quickly got the story and then telephoned to Willie Radley, who informed him that John was just coming into the office at that moment. When John had the news he telephoned King that he would come at once, and that Willie would bring all the gold he had. Soon John and King were together in the Overland Bank, where they kept their large deposit, and by half after ten a truck load of gold was on its way to Lurgan's bank.

The evening extras were all out shrieking, "A Run On Lurgan's Bank! The Great Financier Is Shaky," and this news, belched all over the country, brought Catherine to Wall Street in a great fright. But before she reached the bank the run was turned into a burlesque by Willie, who, after getting a receipt for his gold, said to an assistant cashier, "Pay only in gold when you hear me shout

'bags.' " Quickly securing a dray, he bought a wagon-load of hemp bags and, driving to Wall Street and opposite the bank, began throwing East side English at the waiting multitude. Then he shouted, "We only pay in gold! Buy a bag!"

While he shrieked thus at the top of his voice the assistant cashier, to whom he had spoken, went to Lurgan and said, "Let us put a sign out that 'We pay in gold only.' That Overland lot and our own will keep us busy for two days. You see what a drug the gold will be, as not one out of fifty can carry away his account."

Lurgan smiled. "Good! but who in the devil is the bag seller?"

"That's Radley, the cashier of the Worth bank. They brought us nearly a million in gold. You see, as he has the crowd in a fairly good humor, the sign will do the rest."

The bags were going merrily when Willie saw the sign being tacked up, and then he shouted, "Look — look!" The crowd saw and began to smile, and then to waver in their determination to withdraw their accounts. Willie's cry, "Get bags, you blokes. You can't carry gold like a check," sounded out over the mob. Then a hansom pulled up and Willie cried, "How much for this blooming 'ansom?" The crowd began to yell and those who did not have bags began to jeer those who had. When the crowd began to melt, Willie yelled, "Don't go; we serve lunch. Hot tamales — peanuts — soup! Stay and buy a bag."

The run on Lurgan's bank had ended in a farce, and all because a little man born in Manhattan, with the feel of the island in him, knew that his countrymen could not stand being laughed at. And when Willie was congrat-

ulated by Lurgan, he said, "Only an idea, I am glad it pleased you!"

Just then Catherine, entering, exclaimed, "Oh, father, have they taken all your money?"

The old man smiled, "Not yet, daughter — it will take a good deal more than a run to smash this shop."

Then Catherine, seeing who was with her father, smiled and held out her hand. "How are you, Willie?"

"Fine, thank you."

"I'll go now, father. I was merely nervous at what the papers said. Good-by."

The father allowed her to go without offering his hand, and Willie, noticing this, said, "Let me take you to John; he is in Mr. King's office." He and Catherine walked out, leaving the crusty old man alone. That afternoon Lurgan called at the Overland to thank them for their assistance and said, "As you and a little East side bank were the only ones that came to my aid, I want to thank you."

"I'm afraid," answered the president of the Overland, "that thanks are not due us. It was Worth's and King's deposit that we sent to you, and, of course, by their direct orders."

Lurgan returned to his bank greatly troubled, and after a few minutes he called on King. The first words he heard as he entered were, "You are just a plain skunk to send Catherine crying away from you this morning," and going to his ticker, he repeated, "just a plain skunk."

That night Lurgan found his large house very lonely and disquieting, but he would not admit that he was in the wrong nor would he even write John a letter of thanks. But he beamed on Willie Radley and gave to that youngster much good advice and a great deal of his regard.

And when Willie, with his large, engaging smile, said one day, "I want to buy the old Worth site in Center Street, with the two adjoining lots, so if you should now call up the Insurance Company that owns the property, and tell them to get busy, I'll take you to my heart." The banker lay back in his chair and laughingly cried, "Sure of that, Willie? But may I call you Willie?"

The young man, pulling out a book and writing something in it, said, "Outside of my people, you are the fifth."

"Fifth?" and Lurgan looked a question.

Then Radley showed him the page on which was written, "Those that have permission to call me Willie," and the banker, looking at him, laughed again and exclaimed, "If the property is to be transferred to you, I'll telephone."

"That's it, but I will —"

"Oh, I don't care what you do with it," interrupted Lurgan. "Willie!"

"Yes, Governor?"

"You saved me from a nasty hole and I'm grateful to you. To you personally, mind. And if at any time I can be of use," and Lurgan accented these words, "call on me. Now, boy, it was Playfellow who did that dirty trick and he has got to pay for it."

"You are stronger than ever."

"Yes, thanks to that little red head of yours, which turned a serious run into a joke."

A few weeks later there was a sharp, quick fight over the election of directors in the Insurance Company that had turned John Worth into the street, and the financial world was startled to find that the great Lurgan now had the laugh on Playfellow and Hodges. They had both been voted out of the directorate and there was conse-

quently a new grouping of cliques in Wall Street. All were looking for the big battle that would surely follow Lurgan's smashing retort to the run on his bank, and the men who took bonds and other securities to the Insurance Company to exchange them for cash wondered who William Radley was, for they saw his name on the finance committee. Willie did not know of this honor until he received a note from Lurgan explaining matters.

Then he went to see King, who said, "Yes, that's like him, and he is not quite all skunk." But Willie could not follow this, and as King was evidently not inclined to say more, he went over to thank Lurgan, who said to him, "I'll help you until you get to know the ropes, and in return I want to know all deals that come to the Insurance Company. There is going to be a fight and I am out not only to save this house which I inherited, but to make it larger, and now that Worth has knocked Steel into hell I am through with direct control of industrial combinations."

"And how will my position affect you and John?"

"Oh, he has his Steel now. The combine is over, so I don't see where we shall clash, but I must tell you that if I ever get a chance to hurt him, I will do so."

"And I will do all I can, every waking hour, and all the way to the poorhouse, to help him," protested Willie.

"That's right, boy, that's right," said the old man, peevishly. "Stick to your friends; but he isn't a friend of mine, and at any rate he is not in the active market, so why bother about him?"

About six months later Willie had occasion to call on Lurgan and say, "I hear that the Hodges people are depending on the railroads to keep their mill busy. I also hear of rebates."

"Sure of that last, Willie?"

"Yes, Governor."

"Tell me, how is the fight going?"

And Willie, without mentioning John's name, said, "All the Independents have adopted the same scale of prices for the year, and I am informed that the Hodges mill is losing fifty thousand a week."

"Good! and he won't quit," chuckled the banker.

Willie smiled at the "he," but like a wise boy said nothing. When he was going, the banker said, "Come and see me again soon, and how are things with your bank?"

"Since we got into our new building, as jolly as possible! We have stacks now, could stop a run without the use of bags"; and Lurgan laughed heartily.

Meanwhile John was directing all his energies toward Hodges. He had him in a corner and was pounding him systematically. Knowing that the Hodges mill turned out a very crude metal as compared with his own or that of the Independents, John circularized all steel buyers regarding the kind of contract that they ought to make when purchasing steel, and it was these letters to architects and others that made it difficult for Hodges and Playfellow to get contracts beyond their sphere of personal influence.

It was through armor plates that they were brought to their knees. The Government asked for bids covering a number of vessels, and the specifications read, "pure fibrous steel," not only for the vessels building in their own yards, but in those contracted for elsewhere. As the Hodges mill had made all armor plates while they had the Worth process, they now tried to get the contracts and, having a spy in John's steel mill office, they knew his figures, so they bid slightly lower and secured

the contract. Then they made a great shout, and John, thinking that he now had them, called upon the President.

"To kill off all possible competition, the old trust made the present hard and fast specifications," he explained, "thus enabling the Hodges mill, which at that time was alone in using my process, to have a monopoly of making armor for the Government. Now this same mill has to make the plates for the new contract by the old process and of course it can't make them according to the specifications; but they hope to get their faulty plates passed, owing to the strength of their political pull."

"I shall have something to say just about that time," the President answered.

"That's what I thought; and now, Mr. President, I have a word to say. I am out, as you are aware, to hurt Hodges and Playfellow. I work directly at them, while you are bothered with a constitution, which was made before these brands of bloodsuckers were known, but I am also talking straight business with a straight issue. Now I want all of your assistance, and if you give it to me, I promise a happy day for both of us. I am working on personal grounds and you are working for the country, so I say make them deliver the steel called for in the specifications. Don't let them off, but keep their noses to this grindstone; I will hold in readiness enough steel to cover those vessels in case a war should threaten or other urgent need arise.

"The larger line of publicity which Tyndale gave them is not dead and Congress would give them short notice. But I don't want Congress to meddle with this, as a loss of two or three millions would not bother them after the disclosure that they could not fill their contract. A threat from you with a time limit will send them to one

of the independent mill owners, and then they pay — they pay through their blood, for money is their blood."

"Worth, you hate them?"

"I do, Mr. President."

"And so do I, as they are a terrible curse to the country. They stifle hope and breed socialism; but when you have killed their steel mill as you have their printing business, they still have their Port Arthur — Oil."

"And I am the solitary Jap, eh?"

The President smiled, and said, "Tell me, Worth, about the printing-machines. That was a quick collapse, wasn't it?"

"Yes," answered John, thoughtfully. "It was Lurgan who wound the business up by asking for a receiver. And I can't understand his action as other than a desire to hurt Playfellow."

"He must have lost a pile over Steel?" suggested the President.

"He did, but Hodges was hurt most, for he was drawing interest on two hundred and fifty millions of invested capital as represented by his mill and his ore lands, vessels, and coke furnaces. In reality his outfit is not worth two dollars as an investment to-day, and in less than a year his property will be sold at auction."

"You fight hard and without mercy, Worth."

And John smiled grimly and said, "That's it, without mercy."

In six months there was a bill of sale out against the Hodges mill. It cost them many millions to procure armor plates of pure fibrous steel, and after Playfellow had made his contract good, he said to Hodges, "I wish we had that devil in Oil, so we could take his heart's blood." Playfellow was sore, for the Lurgan clique in

Wall Street was active, and when he had footed up his losses in the last few years he fell upon his knees and prayed to God to deliver over to him the unrighteous Worth.

The day the papers in flaring headlines said, "Worth Has Smashed Playfellow and Hodges' Steel Mill," Willie called upon Lurgan, who, after a moment's talk, bending over his desk said, "How are things?" Radley, smiling, knew what the old man wanted to hear, and when he had finished the story from John's point of view, the banker exclaimed, "He doesn't know how to quit." Willie, knowing that if he mentioned John's name, the old man would explode, said merely, "That's so." But Willie had still another announcement to make, and the shrewd old banker, noting the repressed air of elation and happiness, and thinking it concerned some personal matter, said, "Well, my boy, out with it!"

"It's the finest boy I ever saw; a regular bouncer."

"What?" gasped Lurgan, trying in vain to restrain himself. "What boy do you mean?"

"Why, John's baby, of course. You ought to see it—and say, the mother and John are crazy over it."

Lurgan's face showed plainly the emotions contending within, and Willie rattled on, "I dine with them on Sundays and I have noticed that Mrs. Worth always keeps a vacant chair beside her. I thought at first that it was for some guest who had failed to appear, but that can't be, as there it is every Sunday and always vacant."

Looking at the old man, Willie saw his head fall forward and his shoulders heave. As he went out the leonine head was bowed in grief, so Willie said to the secretary, "Mr. Lurgan does not want to be disturbed until he rings."

CHAPTER XV

THE RECONCILIATION

“OH, father, it’s so good to see you.”

And Lurgan, embracing Catherine, said in a husky voice, “It’s good to have you in my arms, my child. The last two years have been lonely and the old house is gray without you.”

But there was another watching this scene of love, who, judging from his blinking eyes, did not approve it, and that was baby Jo, reposing in his pillows, and gazing upon the man who held his mother. Lurgan looked down with loving eyes, picked the little fellow up, and holding him to his heart said, “I am your grandpa, and you are Jo.”

Crushing the child to him again, the grandfather promised him toys, cars, engines, and rocking-horses, hoping to avert the impending tears. It was hardly to be expected that a baby a few weeks old could be won by such material means, but when he was safe back in his mother’s arms he smiled back at the old man, and Lurgan knew the battle was won.

For an hour he was a child himself, for Catherine had left them together, sure that little Jo would completely win her father’s love. And when she joined them again, her father was sitting on the floor trying to amuse the child.

“Dinner will be ready in half an hour, father. I

telephoned your man to bring your things, for of course you are going to stay all night."

Lurgan, having dressed quickly, rapped at Catherine's door, and being told to enter, sat down in a chair and asked if she expected any one to dinner.

"Only Mr. King, Polly, and her brother, and, of course, Willie who dines with us every Sunday. They thought I would be lonely without John and planned to come."

"Hem," and the old man grunted. "I hear that Percy comes here quite often, and I have a distinct recollection of sending him about his business when he was good enough to call one day and ask if he might marry you."

"Oh, he has got all over that, father," smiled Catherine.

"And the others, have they got all over it, too? Now look here, Catherine, all this tomfoolery has got to stop; I gather from the papers that you are an acknowledged social leader and I can see that every moment of your time is occupied. I also see that a half dozen of young men are in constant attendance to see that you have a good time." And then he quickly asked, "When does your husband return?"

"In ten days."

"Good! Then you will pack up to-morrow and come to your old home for a visit. We will give a big reception and dinner for his return and then these young men and others will see what they will see — ugh," and the old man grunted again. "I have a darned good mind to give you a scolding, Catherine."

The girl, for she was a girl now in her feelings, went up to her father and putting her arms around his neck cried, "Father, it's lovely to be bossed; so scold some more."

"Does nobody boss you now?"

"No, father, I was hurled from a state of dependency into utter independence."

"All that's finished now, as from to-day I'm your father again. You know what that means."

And Catherine, nestling close to him, said, with a merry look in her face, "The Duke of Lockover is here again; he called yesterday and I could see that he still likes me a tiny bit. You will, I know, be glad to see him again."

"Oh, he is an ass, with not so much brains as a canary. I hope you didn't ask him to anything — dinners and such?"

"Why no, father, as John is away I must take care of the proprieties; but as soon as he returns I'll have Title call."

"No, child, I tell you all that gadflyng is over. You have had two full years of it; it's ageing and at any rate it's foolish — and I won't stand it; that's flat."

The girl, nestling closer to her father, exclaimed, "It's heavenly to be bossed," and the old man, wholly mollified now, said, "The boy is immense. I never saw a finer fellow. I must kiss you on the quiet now, for he seemed to resent our demonstrations this noon. What happens when Mr. Worth is at home?"

"Say, 'John,' father"; and with this request his cheek was patted just as she used to pat it. The old man in a moment asked another question and used Worth's first name, and then Catherine kissed him and said, "I have never forgotten for a moment, father, that he is my husband."

And the old man drew her closer, saying, "Of course you haven't; and, daughter — there is one thing bothers me. I had nothing to do with his uncle's death. I

fought him hard — too hard perhaps, and for that I'm sorry."

"His uncle's death? What do you mean, father!"

Lurgan realized that Catherine did not know that story, so he told her and added, "Odd his not telling you that, as he could have given me a black eye by doing so. For I was in with them then and he had every right to think that I was also in that distressing affair."

"Oh, father, he says so very little about the dark things of life. When I told him of a threat I overheard, he asked me a few questions, and I see now he had in mind his uncle's death. And I'm sure that he now knows that you weren't implicated in that, but how terrible to assassinate an old, old man! Oh, but come, father," drying her eyes, "we must go downstairs as we are late." On the way she stopped her father to say, "Watch Willie and Polly."

Remembering an epithet which had rankled in his soul for a year and a half, when Lurgan saw King he said, "I am not altogether a skunk, eh?"

King, smiling pleasantly, answered, "You are all right now."

Lurgan talked to Polly, Percy, and Willie quite amiably, for he was in great good humor. At dinner he kept his eyes on the two whom Catherine had mentioned, and once he saw them glaring at each other. But he was wise in the ways of youth and he thought he saw the trouble that existed.

When Catherine and Polly had gone into the drawing-room, he said to Willie, "Seems cool this evening."

Willie, understanding the allusion, blushed and said, "Yes, very frosty," whereupon King and Percy, who knew Willie's malady, laughed.

After a time the young men joined the ladies and left the two old financiers together. Lurgan said, "I hear that Playfellow closes control of the Overland Bank to-morrow," and then as if that item of news were of no value, he continued, "I see that the seamless coat of steel for war-ships was very successful and that you are arranging for foreign business. You must be making big money."

King answered slowly and musically, "Yes, making it in huge lumps now. The manufacturing business is very interesting. Going to buy copper soon."

"Copper?" repeated Lurgan.

"Yes, a big, undeveloped property came to me a year ago and John is taking a look at it now. If it is anything like as good as represented, we shall buy it."

"Say, King, why don't you bond your steel property?"

"What's the use? Playfellow has paid for it five times over." At this statement King permitted himself to smile largely—"And, again, I think Worth objects to companies. At any rate, we are indebted to you for keeping the railroads straight when we were fighting Playfellow. And Worth, I know, is delighted with the way you have pushed Willie forward. He is in all your companies, isn't he?"

"Yes, I like him, and he is the cleverest man on finance I have ever met. But what about my son-in-law?" and Lurgan's face took on a deeper tinge as he admitted the relationship. "Can't I do something for him in these large concerns?"

"I think not. Just push Willie forward; by the way, he will see you to-morrow morning with an idea. Ah! there is the music," and both relinquished business for the delights of the violin as played by Catherine and accompanied by Polly on the piano.

Polly's sweet face, framed in her blonde hair, was a foil to Catherine's wondrous dark beauty. And the one most deeply stirred by the black, humid eyes, the perfect figure, and the color which came, lingered, and then slowly departed only to come again, was Lurgan, her father. To-night he saw for the first time with reasoning, thinking brain, the wonderful creature that was his daughter. Sinking back into his chair like a huge gorilla, he grasped clearly why men became insane for love, and he also understood why a man like Worth could claim, as of right, a woman so full of heroic charm. And now a thought was shaping which made him fear. Did she know that Worth did not love her? Did she realize why John had married her? He felt that his daughter was a very proud woman, and was now perhaps hiding a sore heart. But the father could not answer his own questions; he felt sure only that he idolized her and that he was going to look after her as of old.

The following morning Catherine said to him, "I will go with you until John returns, and then I must come back here."

The old man said with a snarl, "Can't we both live in the same house?"

"Why, of course, father, so we will arrange it this way; I will go to you for ten days, and then you can come and pay us a visit. I am trying, as you see, to harmonize things; if all goes well we will spend the summer with you in the country. How is that?"

And the banker, looking at his daughter in admiration, said, "All right. Now send Jo with his nurse to me, and I'll take them for a drive in the Park, before I go down town."

"Father?"

"Yes, dear?"

"I made John a promise that Jo was never to go out without Tony, so don't mind the dark little fellow that will be always near his nurse."

"Tony? Tony?" repeated the old man, quietly, "Who is he?"

"I don't know, father, other than that he is very obliging, and apparently exceedingly harmless. He looks after the automobiles."

"And must he accompany you too?"

"Yes, father, always."

"It's very strange, and somehow doesn't sound like Worth. I shouldn't have imagined it."

"Oh, father, you are utterly wrong, if you think he is watching me in that sense. Until last night, I merely put Tony down as a hobby of some sort, but in thinking over Uncle David's untimely end, I think I see Tony's usefulness."

Lurgan bowed his head; he, too, understood. Before they started he said to Tony, "Do you know who I am?"

"Mrs. Worth's father."

"Why do you watch?"

"Ask the Master, Tyndale, or Radley."

Lurgan said no more, but several times that morning he saw the patient trailer always moving like a shadow, always near little Jo.

After the banker had looked at his mail, remembering what King said about a call from Willie, he rang that young man up on the telephone and said, "Little Jo and I are coming around to see you." Shortly Lurgan was in the John Worth Bank and he was taken to the board room where he found Willie, who said, "Sit down for a moment, until I get through with the meeting of the directors."

"Then I had better go?" said Lurgan.

"Oh, don't move. My directors never come, but I hold the meeting just the same. You see I regularly send a notice to Mr. King and John, and they as regularly don't pay any attention to it. Mr. King thinks it a bore, I suppose, and as John's office is over this bank I presume he doesn't think it worth while to detach himself from his other duties. So I hold the meeting alone. As a banker you see the advantages I labor under, as there is no one to find fault or criticise."

"About a year ago I planted small receiving and paying banks in other sections and, like this institution, they are open at night, and you have no idea how well these sprouts have turned out. Quite a large amount of money is gathered from them every day. I called this meeting of the directors to lay my plans before them, and I worked up a fine speech, but no one appeared so I made my speech anyway, and then took a vote and it was decided that I go ahead and establish branches. I tell you, Governor, that I have a cinch."

"Say, Willie, what interest have you in the bank?"

"One fifth."

Lurgan looked disappointed, and then Willie added, "The bank owns the steel mills and the printing works."

"And you own a fifth of these?"

"It looks like it. At any rate I have to manage all their financial deals and I am, as well, responsible for the working of the mills."

Lurgan looked more pleased and said, "And as to the money you make personally?"

"All goes to the bank."

"And no meetings are held between you, King, and Worth?"

"Never held one yet, Governor. If, for instance, John buys that big copper property, he will telegraph King, who will hold one meeting with the owners, and when the price is arranged he will send them to me. And neither he nor John will ever ask another question. Harold Tyndale, our lawyer, has offices in this building, too, so that it's all here under this roof."

At this point the telephone rang, and Willie, excusing himself, put his ear to the receiver and Lurgan heard, "Good morning, Mr. King." Then Willie was told to move every cent out of the Overland Bank and deposit it in Lurgan's bank, to which he answered, "With pleasure." Hanging up the receiver, he told the banker the news.

His eyes showing his pleasure, Lurgan said, "I have always wanted his account and he doesn't take long to work on a hint." After a moment he asked, "Do you handle his cash as well?"

"Only half is his."

And now Lurgan whistled and said, "They are together, then, on the Street."

Willie replied, "That has been the arrangement ever since John won the steel suit, and to-day you get the largest liquid account that I ever heard of and every dollar of it is good clean money."

"King told me last night that you had something to say to me, but before we get to business I should like to ask if you are related to Edward Radley who once owned a small bank in Radley, Ohio? I knew him when I was a young man, and years ago, when he visited New York, I used to entertain him at my home."

Willie said mournfully, the laughter all gone from his face, "He was my father." After a moment he went on. "He owned considerable land. Oil was found and,

honest soul, he thought that he could operate his own. But why tell an old story, as Playfellow blacklisted him, and five years later he was driving horses on the East side — always kind, always cheerful. He worked hard that his children might get some education. He died a few years ago, or just after I got into the savings bank."

Lurgan said nothing as his heart was touched with the tragic story.

Then Willie, to change the conversation, said, "On bag day, to make a panic, Playfellow threw into the market all of his holdings in your Midland railroad. And as you know, he broke the market price of this stock thirty points, as for an hour the stock exchange went crazy. Of course, Playfellow thought that it would be easy to work the old scheme and get this stock back next day, but this time the game didn't pan out as he anticipated because King bought every share that he could get his hands on, and to-day this bank holds every share that Playfellow threw on the street at that time and he has had to pay fancy prices to secure another lot of Midland stock. Through Mrs. Worth, I recently met the Bleekers, Cullimores, and Mannerings, and last week I saw them, and they are quite willing to give you voting control of their holdings for the coming election of officers and directors. To each and every one I explained carefully that we wanted to throw Playfellow and Hodges out of the directorate; so there's the story, and what do you think of it?"

"I like it, Willie; but who suggested that I was the man to handle this matter?"

"Why, Governor, you are the man, because you have run this road for years, and nice clean people are getting very sick of Playfellow."

"Answer my question, Willie."

"I got it from Mr. King, Governor."

"I have learnt this morning that you, King, and Worth work as a unit in all things. Who is the head, Willie?"

"John Worth, Governor," and Willie's eyes glistened as he spoke his friend's name.

"What is he after?"

"Playfellow and Hodges."

"He is not through with them, then?" and the old man looked astonished, for he thought Worth's work was confined to Steel and other such commodities. He had never pictured John as manipulating railroads so as to hurt Playfellow. But here Worth was on the Street through King, in the financial world through the growing power of William Radley, and evidently wanting the Lurgan bank, too, and its owner. It was very evident, from what Radley had just said, that Catherine had been able to enlist the help of the old families who really owned the Midland railroad.

The old man musingly said, "I sized him up wrong from the start, or rather I didn't know him"; then he caught sight, through the window, of little Jo cooing in the arms of his nurse as she sat in the carriage outside, and he said, "Tell me the Tony story."

"John has Tony to look after Mrs. Worth and the little one. You see he lost a father and an uncle and he is careful because he knows the kind of people he is fighting. But Tony is not the only one," and Willie, speaking in a hushed voice, said, "every servant in his house and all the men about his place know that they are answerable for the safety of Mrs. Worth and the child. All his people have been recruited from the East side — hard workers, neat and alive, very much alive to possibilities.

"In other words, there is no pity in our fight. They don't know the meaning of that word, nor does Tony, and he is attached to John as a dog is attached to its master. And this same black-eyed, wiry little fellow has built up with Harold Tyndale a secret service that is perfect, because it's purely of New York."

And Lurgan, as he listened, marveled. Yet he could say nothing against this desperate care of a man for his wife and child, but he wondered at it, because as John Worth did not love his wife, why this trouble to hedge her about?

Willie broke into his thoughts by saying, "John takes care of his own, Governor."

And Lurgan concluded, "That's it, 'his own.'" And getting up he said, "I'll handle the railroad deal and will lay other wires at once, and it will be a great joy to throw Playfellow down hard. But tell me, how did you get around Neil Mannering?"

"Mrs. Worth saw his wife and fixed the matter up. I don't know how, but I do know that they all want Playfellow thrown out and in the open, Governor — that is, give 'em a hint of what's going to happen."

"All right, in the open. Good day to you, Willie."

"Good day, Governor."

CHAPTER XVI

A POOL OF WATER

JOHN was on the shores of Lake Superior looking over a large tract of very thickly timbered land, but at the moment he was not viewing the property with the idea of using nature's growth. He was trying to determine whether this area carried all the copper ore that the vendors claimed for it. Besides watching the output of the two hundred men that were at work, he was tramping over the large claim to fix its extent and its geography definitely in his mind. He had reached the place by a power-boat which he had chartered at Sault Ste Marie, and with a cook he located his camp at a little cup in the shore about two miles from the large camp of men who were opening up the different leads.

His tramp through the forest with the surveyor was a joy to John, for the silent woods appealed to him strongly. He had made the great round of the property and was now watching the developing of the mines with growing interest, as he saw that there was evidently a great deal of ore. Experts had gone over the land many times, and all the reports had read more or less alike as to the value of the deposits, but as the property was very expensive, John wished to be certain that all was what it was represented to be.

The present owners were honest folk and would not have sold their mines had it not been for the trust, of

which they were afraid. To Worth they had said, "You have the money and you do not fear Playfellow. Come and see what we have and, if you are satisfied, pay our price." Worth liked this kind of talk, and after spending two weeks on the land had determined to buy.

There was, however, something on the property that puzzled him, and that was a large pool of amber-colored water which owed its size and depth to a very old mine. Many times he had walked to this pool, which was not more than two hundred yards distant from his camp, and the more he saw of it the more he was mystified.

He had finally decided that the mound-builders, that ancient race of people who have left such lasting records of their habitation near Lake Superior, had followed deep into the earth some lead or vein and were driven out by a spring of water. For he saw the face of the rock and the earth banks on either side, and over these was a dense growth of old trees. The overflow trickled into the little cup in the lake where his camp was located. The prime reason for John's great interest in this pool of about an acre in extent was that one day, on coming home, he tripped and fell on his hands into the little overflow that ran into the lake, and though he merely wet the palms of his hands and held them out as he walked toward the lake, intending to wash them, on looking again he was surprised to see them absolutely white and clean. They appeared, in fact, as if he had scoured them thoroughly, and this was odd because he had been tramping all day and they had been greatly begrimed.

So he went on to camp and, undressing, took a dip in the cool waters of Superior. Then dinner occupied all of his attention, but afterwards his hands again claimed his thoughts because they felt so soft and grateful. The

next day, having wiped a cylinder of his power-boat with his handkerchief, he pulled that through the water in the pool, and to his surprise it came out clean. John now concluded that this pool contained some great cleansing chemical, and the constant ripple in the pool told him that it was living water. When his handkerchief had dried, he saw that attached to it was a solid wall of white, fluffy substance, and he then gave the water other tests, always thinking of it as a cleanser. He was amazed at the results, for a bit of "waste," solid with oil and dirt, came from the water as clean as if rinsed in chemicals for an hour.

The last day of his stay he made a box of green wood, large enough to hold ten or twelve gallons, as he had made up his mind to have the water tested to see what properties it contained. But the box was faulty and leaked, so, after emptying it, he put oil waste in the seams, and then turning into it the contents of the large square tin which held his oil supply for the power-boat, he went to the pool and partially filled the tin with water. Shaking the water violently about, he let it run out and then his nose told him that there was now no smell of oil. He also saw that the outside of the can, which had been streaky with oil and dirt, was as clean as when it had left the factory.

John laughed aloud and said to the pool, "I'll turn you into a laundry." So in amusement he filled the can and, corking it, started for his camp. Then all being ready, he sent his oil toward the carbureters and turned a crank to start his engines. The explosion which drove the cylinders told him that he had struck an unusual lot of oil, because the detonation, instead of being sharp, was as heavy as the boom of a cannon, and the boat jumped

forward with great speed. Being a mechanic, he was careful to see if the cylinders were damaged, but they were not, and then John kept his feed valve very low, thinking that the booms would soon stop and the sharp sound, that he knew, would be resumed. But in all that run of a hundred miles John saw that his engines were being driven by a new force, as if the oil were charged with dynamite, and he realized that if he turned on full power to his cylinders they would be blown to pieces.

On the arrival at the "Soo," he lifted the lid and looked with a puzzled face at the box which contained the oil, and, putting his face close down, was startled to find that it had no odor whatever. He took the wooden box out of the boat and, packing it carefully, never lost sight of it until it was in his laboratory over the bank in New York. Then going to King's office, he said, "I have bought the copper property. Willie will take care of the details and in due course we will be in the copper business. I am going back there at once, and in the meantime we want to secure fifty or sixty acres of meadow land, as close as you can get it to our Jersey property. We are also going into the oil business now, and we shall want this property for an oil refinery. I hope you still intend to join me in this venture?"

King left the chair in which he was sitting, and John smiled as he saw him go to the ticker. In a few moments the old man said, "I'll telephone Willie to buy," and he knew by these simple words that King was his partner in oil. In a few minutes King interrupted John's description of the Lake Superior purchase by asking:

"Have you been home?"

"I only just arrived and was anxious to get the copper properly on way to settlement. Am off now to see

Catherine and the boy. Good-by, as I won't see you again for some weeks."

But at that statement King smiled — "I'll see you to-night. But no, I mustn't tell you other than that our plans have prospered. What is it, John? As I see you with the light on your face, you seem as though you were laboring with some excitement."

"I have an idea, but I am not sure of it yet. I think at the end of another two or three weeks I shall astonish you."

John went home and learned that he was booked for a big dinner and reception at Lurgan's. That evening Catherine said, "Oh, John, father has met his match! Jo bosses him all over the place. Here is the list of guests to-night. And I'm so glad that you don't mind our going to him this summer. But will you really be away most of the hot weather? Surely you don't harbor any ill-will against father, John?"

"Of course not; why should I?"

"I'm thinking of your poor uncle David. He told me that story and oh, John, how silent you can be! But those others make me feel creepy. I should like to hurt them," said Catherine, determinedly.

The meeting between Lurgan and John came off better than Catherine expected. Her womanly wit suggested that their first meeting should take place before strangers. She went to her father's early so as to take a look at the rooms to see that the flowers and other matters pertaining to the dinner were arranged properly, and also to be there for the first arrival, as she was to receive the guests.

"No, you can't come with me," she said to John, "I want to show you the old house in gay attire, which means

that I want to surprise you. So come exactly at eight — not a minute before."

On the moment he was at Lurgan's door, and Slater smiled on seeing Mr. Snowman. The servants made a point of taking his coat and serving him in other little ways, which showed John that he had merely come from one home to another. Going upstairs he came to the reception-rooms, where he heard the hum of voices, and entering, Lurgan came forward, as if he had been in the habit of meeting his son-in-law every day, and holding out his hand said, for the benefit of those who had their ears wide open, "Good trip West, John?"

Smiling, Worth replied, as he grasped the old man's hand, "Very good — every way, thanks. It's pleasant to be home again."

Lurgan's strong face beamed at the word home, and in many ways he disappointed those who thought to see him show reserve or coolness toward Worth. Later that night, when the guests were gone, he said to John, "I have been getting a lot of information from Willie, but I should esteem it a favor if you told me your program."

"I am going after their oil business."

"That is dangerous."

"I know it, but I can't stop now."

Then the old banker thought for a time and said quietly, "What will you take for an interest in the John Worth Bank?"

And now John was startled, and he said slowly, "King is alone in the world and he knows from experience what failure is, and Willie is young. In other words, the John Worth Bank will shortly assume an undertaking that is extremely hazardous, for I won't stop short of the last

dollar. I shall, of course, make things clear to King later on and give him a chance to pull out, but I feel, somehow, that he will stick; but with you it is different, as you have so much more than money to lose."

"I see it all, the fight, and the possibility of failure, and I again ask what will an interest equal to yours or King's cost me?"

"King started the bank with one hundred thousand dollars. I have since returned him eighty thousand dollars for control and Willie's share. If you will pay me twenty thousand dollars you shall have a fifth. How is that?"

"Why, John, a fifth is worth many hundred times more than twenty thousand dollars."

"To a stranger or investor, yes, but you are different and of course you must see all I mean."

"All right, John, I'll send Willie the check to-morrow; and now, boy, put up the strongest fight you know how."

"I think I'll satisfy you in that respect."

And they parted, not great friends, perhaps, but with at least a sense of mutual respect. Lurgan saw now with clear eyes the potentiality of the bank, and when he called on King the following morning, to tell him what he and John had arranged, he again asserted that twenty thousand dollars was not enough for an interest.

King replied, "I have very seldom heard John talk finance. But I know that it was Radley's hope to eventually get you interested in the bank. Long ago I suggested giving you a share and letting you in at the bottom as that would mean a combination that could not be whipped, so I am not hearing anything new this morning. Of course you see what is opening up. John means to fight the Oil crowd. That is a colossal undertaking, but

neither you nor I dare say he cannot do it, as witness what he did with Steel. Willie thinks you can destroy their power in the railroad world and it is also his notion that you and I, working together, can materially hurt them financially. But of course we must work systematically and, well, the bank is a good clearing-house."

Thinking of his question to Radley, Lurgan said, "Who runs the bank, Jim?"

And the old man walked to the ticker and lifting the tape answered, "Willie is a clever youth and I like him, too, but he is not in John's class, and I don't believe we are either, Lurgan. Of course I see that all these plans are Worth's, and somehow you can't kick or say a word as he possesses marvelous magnetism, ability, and courage. You remember, perhaps, when Southern went to a corner. I was on the right side of that deal and was in a particularly happy frame of mind, for I had made a lot of trouble for the Playfellow ring. John came in, I told him about the deal, and he said, 'As it looks easy, why not rush the stock to one thousand?' Well, I gave the orders and next day the stock exchange had to arrange the settlements. I tell you that story to show you John's influence over me."

After a few moments, King added, "He is a rare, special kind of devil, with no more idea of fear than the chair you are sitting in. I never thought of questioning his judgment and he was here all that day as happy as possible. When I asked him why he did not come on the Street, he laughed and said, 'My way of hurting them is more thorough.'"

"If he only loved Catherine," Lurgan cried, "I should be the happiest man in the world, for he possesses all the essentials I like." Then quickly changing his frown

he added, "It was fun last night watching the little ants hover around my girl." And, rising, he said, "Don't forget Sunday night and the music."

Lurgan went to his office feeling pleased that he was father-in-law to John Worth.

CHAPTER XVII

THE OIL WAR BEGINS

JOHN left New York the next day for the silent pool, but this time he was alone with the little power boat, the great woods, and the stretches of water. He made boxes of all sizes and found that after the wood was allowed to soak in the amber-colored pool the odor of the crude oil with which he previously filled them disappeared. Something in the water took away the smell and gave the oil a new property which made it more viscid but more transparent, the size of the box seeming to make no difference.

After many tests, for he had carried five barrels of ordinary crude oil in his power boat, he found that the soaked wood would deodorize the contents of a full barrel, and his oil stove showed him that the oil so treated would burn about five times as long as that untreated. After soaking one of the boxes in the spring, he dried the wood thoroughly in the sun and found, on filling it with oil, that the potency for refining and transmuting the contents was undiminished. This test afforded him especial satisfaction, while other experiments which he made convinced him that the illuminating, as well as the heating value of his refined product was increased some four or five fold.

When he had made sure of every point he left the copper property and, going into a populous interior town

of Michigan, contracted for a large barrel factory to be erected the coming winter on the shore of his little bay. Then he journeyed South where crude oil was going to waste, and made contracts whereby he agreed to take the total yield for three years.

John was in the South three weeks before Playfellow heard of him and his mission, and the magnate greatly rejoiced when he learned of Worth's tremendous purchases, for now he thought he had a grip on the man whom he hated so intensely. But John did not delay long in the South, as when it was known what he was after, scores of dealers came to him, delighted that they had at last found a market for their oil. Playfellow had been for years strangling these people by paying them prices that did not cover their expenses, and as the Texans and others knew that Worth had driven Playfellow to his knees on Steel, and as they were aware that he had the money to pay for that which he bought, they not only gave him all he wanted, but agreed to keep their surplus for him. In other words, they would not sell to Playfellow.

But all wondered why Worth did not build a pipe line. One man of prominence said to him, "Look here, notwithstanding Playfellow's lobby, in three hours we will pass a law granting you a permit." To this John laughingly replied, "I don't care for the pipe line. I am to send my barrels knocked down, you fill and ship them to New York and I pay only on these barrels which my agent passes." Nothing more could be said to a man who knew so exactly what he wanted.

When he was again in New York, Willie said to him jovially, "Well, John, we will at least keep warm this winter."

King, who knew of these enormous purchases, said

nothing; he was waiting for John to speak. And when Worth did, of course he walked to his ticker and then replied, "Then we live for the next two or three years. I always felt that I would strike something exciting before I died."

Lurgan exclaimed, "Give them hell — that's all I ask," and John began building his refineries in the meadows by the river.

When frost came he went West to superintend his barrel factory and was pleased to see his pool frozen over. As he was in a lumbering community he had no trouble in putting an immense force of men to work cutting and hauling lumber to his mill. In the spring he began the manufacture of barrels, and as his mill contained every modern contrivance and some of his own inventions as well, he could rightly say that the logs went in one opening of the mill to come out barrels at the other. A sluiceway carried the staves and hoops to the pool, where they were left until the pool was filled, and then they were taken out on the lake side and put in ships and sent to their destination.

An East-sider, a man whom John could trust, was put in charge of the mill. To him John said, "All staves and heads must go through that pond as the water there contains something that cleanses them. I'll certainly know if you make any mistake in this simple direction, and when the pool is full, pile in the sheds, and ship as I have directed in units. Every barrel, that is, staves, heads, and hoops, must be securely tied together and all must go through that pool." The foreman said firmly, "Trust me, John," and then Worth went to New York, confident that he had attended to everything and that he had also arranged for an enormous supply of oil.

It was imperative that his building in the meadows should take the shape of a real refinery, for the oil in the barrel was to come here, be emptied and rebarreled in well-made iron-hooped barrels. He had erected another barrel factory for this purpose, for it was very important to make every one, even King, Lurgan, and Willie, believe that the oil was deodorized in the meadows. Consequently he built a receiving building, which contained a large quantity of moving wheels which were to make a great noise, and in addition he put into his tank hundreds of wires, for he wanted to establish the idea that he deodorized oil electrically. He knew well that the greatest living electrician could not say that such a process was impossible, and when this building was completed it looked very much like business. From the moment it was finished it became a closed book to all the world, for no one was allowed inside but four men whom John knew he could trust. But even these were deceived, as they started the dynamos after the huge tank was full of oil, and they did not suspect but that their work was deodorizing the oil.

The tank was closed to them, for the barrels that came from the oil fields were unloaded in the yards and from there carried by wire rope to a platform where they were broken by machinery. The oil ran into the tank and the empty barrels were sent down a shoot to the engine-room, where they were burnt as fuel. The workmen on the inside followed the indicator, which showed the level of the oil in the tank, and kept the wheels going, firm in the belief that they were making deodorized oil, whereas all this pretense was merely a blind to hide the great power of the little pool on the shore of Lake Superior. Simultaneously with the erection of the Meadows plant, which

included factories for the manufacture of the by-products of the oil, such as vaseline and others, John was erecting an immense building near his type-machine works for the manufacture of oil stoves and burners. He had invented a scheme for turning up or lowering any number of wicks in a burner by the simple process of turning one small wheel, and this invention permitted him to arrange his wicks in circles that might be expanded into any number. His invention handled the flat or rectangular wicks equally well, so that he was enabled to throw into a small or large fireplace an amount of heat that coal could not equal.

When his initial plans were perfected and the tools built so that he could make stoves and burners quickly, John gave to the public prints the story of his plant and his aims. In a public demonstration he showed that no matter how his oil was applied, it was five times better than the product that had heretofore been used. A situation full of potentialities was of course at once created, for the public knew that Worth would not sell or combine with Playfellow, and they were also aware that Worth was now attacking the great money king on his own ground.

So John was generously supported, and his oil was purchased at two dollars a barrel in preference to Playfellow's at one dollar and fifty cents. In doing this the public knew full well that they were helping themselves, because they found that Worth's statements as to his oil were correct. But apart from its comparative value, John's oil was free from odor, and it was this great fact that made his commodity popular. In a short time he was doing a thriving business in oil by the barrel, to the very great annoyance of Playfellow and his handy man,

Hodges, who, with the loss of his great fortune in Steel, had become Playfellow's shadow in crime. And now these two men laughed, that is, almost laughed, for real mirth could not exist on their lips or in their hearts, and they rubbed their hands many times and said they now had Worth where they wanted him. They forthwith reduced the price of oil to one dollar a barrel and began their operations. They would have liked to have ended Worth's career by an assassin, but they had never forgotten his threat and they were afraid to try the quick and expeditious way that had been so useful to them on many occasions when any man dared to enter the oil business.

They were, of course, making every endeavor to discover how Worth deodorized oil, but it was impossible to get a man into his refinery. They had sent a trusty to the Lake Superior mill, who reported, "Merely a fine large barrel factory, nothing more." Another had gone South to the oil fields and reported, "Only crude oil is put in the barrels." They had tried hard to bribe some of the refinery hands as to Worth's method, only to find that there were still honest men in the world.

Hodges said, "It's no use, as the refinery where they change the oil is a closed book. I found an old man partially blind, who has a daughter about sixteen, and I think we could get at him, but he only delivers lunches from the boarding-house on the hill and his information is worthless. Besides, he is never admitted to the refinery; he taps on the door and then his work is finished until twelve at night. His girl always goes with him to show him the way."

And so Playfellow for once was balked, and with a terrible fear he saw Worth's growing business.

But up to this time John was selling oil only for lamp use and to railroads, and here he had a large sale as Lurgan took care that all his roads ordered the Worth oil. But the Western and the other large systems would not buy from John, and as they were using his process in their steel mill, he had it taken out and then told all the Independents to treble prices on all Western orders. In an advertisement John at once warned the public against traveling on a road—mentioning the Western—which used brittle steel for axles. This started the war, and Playfellow immediately lowered his oil to fifty, then to twenty-five cents a barrel.

John now launched his big scheme of burners and stoves and made an announcement to all housekeepers, of whom there were about twelve millions, "You have been using a furnace which burns coal and, if your house is a small one, it has cost you fifty dollars a winter to keep warm. I can arrange my burner so as to fit your furnace, and by using our oil you will be able to heat your house for twenty dollars." Taking a seven-room house as a basis, he made his scale, for he had burners that would fit furnaces of all sizes. To those who had flats he gave his price on stoves at one dollar each, and guaranteed that the heating of a small flat would not cost more than fifteen dollars, which included heat for cooking as well. But it was to houses that John paid particular attention, for he well knew that furnace expenses ran into millions of dollars annually, and as the furnace is usually tended by the head of the family, he attached to his burner a scheme for turning it on or off from the hall upstairs, so that a visit to the cellar to fix the fire was not necessary. As the oil was furnished automatically to the furnace and burners, he hoped that he would interest many house-

holders, and he did, for his orders for burners and oil far exceeded his expectations. His stoves, too, were ordered in great numbers, as the price of one dollar, compared with the five dollars which the trust charged, made his article very popular, and he made "No smell" a byword.

Cutting prices did not affect John in the least, as he still charged two dollars a barrel for his oil, and even during the first year he made a very handsome profit and, at the same time, had the satisfaction of knowing that he had forced Playfellow to cut down his monthly dividend of ten per cent to five per cent. This so gladdened the hearts of King and Lurgan, that out of pure joy they hammered oil stock from nine hundred dollars to three hundred dollars a share.

Willie, too, was beaming, and especially so because on this Saturday John was to call for him at one o'clock with his new automobile and, after lunch in the bank, they were to go to Lurgan's place up the river for Catherine. They proposed then to take a sixty-mile ride to Platt's, near Bernardsville, where they were to spend the week's end, and as Willie had not seen his heart's delight, Polly, for two weeks, he now tingled with anticipation and pleasurable excitement.

In two hours they were at Lurgan's and shortly they were on the long road to Platt's. Catherine always enjoyed her husband as chauffeur, for with him nothing ever went wrong. They were not accompanied by servants or luggage, as these followed in another machine, and John loved motoring, as it was his only outdoor amusement.

When they were nearly half-way, Catherine said, "Do let us stop at Fowler's. It's so pleasant and so much like

the country inns of England." And when they arrived at the pleasant little wayside hotel, Fowler came out and bade them all welcome. To Catherine he said, "Always glad to see you, Mrs. Worth, and how are your father and Master Jo?"

"Very well, thank you, Fowler! And yes, I'm thirsty, so serve iced coffee in the orchard, please, as I'm sure it's too warm inside."

The old housekeeper and his wife fussed considerably over Catherine, for they had both worked for her father, one as butler and the other as housemaid. And after they were married Lurgan had bought them this farm and, starting a hotel, they were much patronized by touring parties.

Before John had stopped his engines in the yard of the hotel, a chauffeur, coming up to him, said, "I'm driver for the Mannerings and our machine broke down about two miles from here. Perhaps you will loan me a battery, if you have an extra one, as ours is dead?"

John answered, "Jump in," and in a few minutes he found Mr. and Mrs. Mannerling by the roadside awaiting the return of the driver. Having met them before, he said laughingly, "Come and join us; we are at Fowler's."

"That's just where we are going," exclaimed Helen Mannerling. "And it was so very good of you to come to us. Neil, let us drive with Mr. Worth, and our man can follow."

Very soon all were seated in the orchard and served with iced drinks. Mrs. Mannerling and Catherine, who were old friends, talked animatedly about cars and their frolics, and Neil Mannerling and John were discussing that which was farthest from their thoughts, politics. The men were studying each other, looking into each other's eyes

and groping for the thread of underlying purpose which each knew existed in the other. Willie was watching the two, apparently without doing so.

But Willie ceased to study Worth and Mannerling when he reached Platt's. He was saying good day to Polly in the library, where they were alone. The young lady, her head lightly tilted, cried, "I suppose I must speak to you, as you are a guest."

"Look here, Polly, if you ever treat me that way again I'll tell your mother, and I feel sure that she'll punish you."

"I am not Polly to you, please remember that. And you were perfectly shocking the last time I was with you."

"Ugh," cried Willie, "I like that, when I had all I could do to keep you from kissing me."

"Oh, William Radley, you are perfectly horrid!" and Polly, with eyes full of anger, stamped her foot.

"Are you going to marry me, Polly?"

"Look here," and Polly went up close to Willie, "If you were the very last man in the world, I would refuse you. Now will you take that as final?"

Then Willie pulled out his little book and, examining it, cried, "You have refused me twenty-three times and, hardened girl, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. Say, Polly."

"Call me Miss Platt."

"Polly, come and show me the garden, it's only half past six."

"Will you be good?"

"As an angel"; and then the two walked out among the roses and very shortly were apparently the best of friends.

And in that week-end party at the Platts, John secured

the respect and esteem of the largest owner of Midland, for Mannering had said to him Monday morning, "I believe you are dining with us this week, but come and see me at my office one day soon, as I want to hear more about your fight with the Oil people."

"Thank you," John replied. "I'll call Wednesday morning."

This invitation meant much to John, for he saw clearly that he would need every assistance in his fight with Playfellow. The Midland, through its allied roads, was a big factor in the West and Southwest, but Mannering had not gone beyond the Midland proper in helping Lurgan. It was an open secret that it was his wife who had insisted on his compelling Playfellow and Hodges to resign from the directorate of the road which her grandfather had built. Lurgan had been working on this big silent man for a year with the hope of getting him to instruct the presidents of the different roads in which he was interested to buy Worth's deodorized oil, but so far Mannering had only marked time, for he had said that such action might mean a railroad war, the Northern clique being strongly for Playfellow. He did not yet feel certain that Worth would not combine, and this was his real reason for his stand in this deadlock.

Willie, finding Polly in an amiable mood one day, had suggested a week-end party to bring Worth and Mannering together, and in the two days under the same roof they had become acquainted. When Willie saw how well his little scheme was going, he said some things to Polly such as, "When you are my wife, I'll treat you every week to a cream puff and some good advice." And as words of this kind always meant a row, they were generally at sword's point, to Catherine's infinite amusement.

To see Willie at a house party made one wonder if he were ever serious, and where he kept his business knowledge, as apparently he did not possess any other faculty but the one of amusing. When cogitating about Willie, which was very often, Polly marveled why he was trusted so much by Mr. Lurgan, for it was very evident that he was the banker's confidential aide-de-camp.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WINNING OF MIDLAND

AT the end of the second year Willie's balance sheet did not wear so agreeable an aspect as was formerly the case. In October of that year, Playfellow and his clique offered a stove and sufficient oil for the winter for one dollar, and to householders a special furnace made to burn his oil, and with it oil for six months' use for two dollars. Here, indeed, was a cut, and as the fight had been going on for more than a year the public had lost their first great interest and saw only a chance to keep warm during the cold weather for almost nothing. Toward the end of the same month, when John was in the South, Lurgan and King met at the bank and, against the wishes of Willie, cut the price of their oil to fifty cents a barrel. They also made a sixty per cent reduction in burners and stoves, and when John saw this announcement in the papers, he smiled and thought, "Here at last is bankruptcy for some one."

In the meantime many oil fields had been offered to John and he had a staff of experts looking at properties, but so far he had not found what he wanted. His first great requirement was something with an unusually good output and near the seaboard. John knew that in order to make a long, hot fight, he must own his own oil wells, for, with the cut in prices, orders increased, and as every purchase was now filled at a loss it was important to make the loss as light as possible.

Early in November he secured what he wanted in an oil field that met all his requirements, and when he had bought it he felt that the outlook was a shade brighter. But his faint joy was nipped in December, for Lurgan and King then made a further reduction all around, and now the public saw a death grapple between great forces. At the end of the season Willie did not smile, nor did Playfellow rub his hands with pleasure, for that year he passed his dividends and King hammered his stock from three hundred dollars to ten dollars a share.

In the meantime the fight had extended to other countries. But John would not sell oil to Europe for less than one dollar a barrel, which was the equivalent of twenty cents for the Playfellow article. Lurgan and King being very busy on the Street, he remained in New York to handle the fight, endeavoring to supply only his regular customers. He was well aware that his wealth, added to that of Lurgan and King, was not to be compared to the resources of Playfellow and his associates, so he nursed his business and his money, realizing that now was the time for economy and strategy. But he continued the war by shipping oil to all centers. This meant that Playfellow, with his huge organization, was under a terrible daily expense, for his delivery wagons were in every hamlet and his pipe lines extended in all directions. He was compelled, by force of circumstances, to give away, for that is what it amounted to, one hundred barrels to John's one.

Playfellow hoped that a compromise could be effected, so little did the outlook satisfy him, so he sent Hodges to see Lurgan, but the banker would not permit that gentleman to enter his office. The fight was therefore continued and daily grew more severe. The four great factions that

controlled Wall Street were now merged into two, and Neil Mannering, who for years had not taken an active part in business affairs, was now managing all the roads in which he was interested. He had lately taken a great fancy to John, who said to him one day, "Be good and order from Playfellow all the oil that you can use for a year."

"I see you want to add to their losses," answered Mannering, and forthwith he telegraphed instructions to all his managers, and the huge order that was placed made Playfellow grind his teeth when he heard of it, for he saw the game that had been worked. But he was powerless to stop it for the contracts had been signed. Through his agents he then tried to place a big order with John for the roads that were with him, but Worth was not to be caught at his own game. Playfellow was worried over the attitude of some of the wealthy residents of the West End, more especially by Mannering, who was again active in railroad affairs. This "dark colossus," as he was called, had dining with him one night a number of men who in the past had been satisfied to leave the management of their large railroad properties in the hands of paid presidents. To these Mannering, when the coffee, cigars, and liqueurs were on the table, said,

"I have been watching this fight over oil with interest. If oil were the only issue at stake, I should remain a spectator, but both Lurgan and Playfellow have bought largely into our roads and we must now choose between these two men. In many ways we are affiliated with the banker, for he is of New York and belongs to an old family, and, personally, I should dislike to see him hurt financially. Of Playfellow I haven't anything good to say, still he is representing a powerful clique and he must

be discussed and measured to-night. Now I come to the man John Worth, and about him I want to say a few words. I learned a week ago from Mr. Low, the manager of our own bank, who makes it his business to know things, that Hodges was responsible for the death of Peter Worth, and that Playfellow and Hodges instigated the murder of his uncle, David Worth. By these facts we know why John Worth dislikes the men he is now fighting, and I am thoroughly convinced that he will not sell or combine with the Oil crowd. I may say here that I like Worth and believe in him. You must also keep in mind that we are using, free of charge, his process in our steel mill, and in all the time that we have used it he has always, in the most exact way, lived up to the letter he wrote us which gave permission to use his invention. Since that letter he has written us but once on the subject of steel, and that was to suggest that if we found his process valuable we give the workmen attached to the mill an interest in its profits.

"Mr. Low told me later that a similar letter, worded equally as apologetically, if I may use that word, was sent to the Independents. The mill managers, coming together, decided to meet Mr. Worth's views and a plan was drawn up and sent to him, but he politely and pleasantly refused to have anything to do with the matter. He again assured the managers that his letter was merely a suggestion.

"All this brought home to me the fact that Worth is not a meddler or a socialist, but that he is merely trying for justice all around. Then he found a way to deodorize oil and the present situation is the result; it is to discuss this situation that I asked you to come here to-night."

Every one was now listening attentively, with arms on

the table, and looking at the man who had married Helen Carpenter and afterwards had more than doubled her large fortune. Mannering was dark and swarthy, with rather an ugly face, but fascinating on account of the intellectual force that seemed to dominate his features. It was evident that he was a very powerful man physically, and they all knew that he possessed great executive ability. All those gathered about the table loved the man, and later that evening they proved that they would back him in any kind of fight.

"I learn," he continued, "that the Western have broken their traffic agreements; that is, they run ghost trains in order not to waybill Playfellow's oil. They are dead-heading all Oil's employees, and in every way possible helping Playfellow to overcome Worth. But the Western doesn't limit their assistance to their road, for their banks have been called into requisition to supply Playfellow with money on oil stock as collateral. Of course that stock is worthless at this moment, and yet the banks are not worrying, because they are, as I have stated, 'Western' concerns."

"Now you see the situation and what do you suggest?"

"It was Percy Platt who cried, "Give us your ideas, old man."

"That's what I say," exclaimed Mannering's brother-in-law, a tall, good-looking young fellow with curly hair.

Bertie, another scion of the Carpenter family, chirruped: "Let out a yard or two more, Neil."

Then Mannering smilingly went on, "We have two roads that enter New York from Jersey. One runs through a part of Pennsylvania and meets our main line at Buffalo. Now this road is very rich and possesses an immense reserve fund, so I suggest that we build a new

line from a point west of the Oranges so as to take in all the large Pennsylvania cities, and that we operate this by electricity. As you may know, we have the plans for this road now, and as we are coming to electricity, I bespeak that power for our new venture. For the next move I call in all our managers and tell them about the new railway, and that with the first sod turned over we may expect a fight with the Western, and that we are going to carry the fight to all points in America as we meet the Western or its allies in every one of the large cities in our country. I don't think we can afford to see Lurgan smashed by Playfellow, who is backed by a large railroad. And if Lurgan, Worth, and King are compelled to go under, Oil will have the country by the throat again, not only in their own commodity, but in steel and every other industrial, as they had before John Worth came upon the scene.

"Once before Playfellow made the Western do his bidding, that was when he was aiming for control of Oil"; and now Mannering and the others stood up. "They have wantonly destroyed life, as I can prove. Now I say, let's give them the cold steel and in a short time you will see the collateral of which I spoke dumped into the market, for the Western, after my orders go out, will know that they are not now fighting three lone men, but a corporation that can buy and sell them. And in fighting Worth's battles, we are also fighting our own. I wouldn't have suggested this move had they lived up to their agreements. Again, I like Worth's way of making Independents, and when I asked him to visualize a success in his present fight he said, 'More Independents.' So I say, let's throw behind Worth, Lurgan, and King our railroads, as the Western has thrown theirs to Playfellow."

A shout of "Good," was Neil Mannering's answer.

Catherine, who was with Helen and Polly, heard the great shout in the dining-room, and when they were called in to drink a toast to Worth, with tears in her eyes she said, "I'm so glad, so very glad." And brightening she cried, "How good you all are!"

"Say, Mrs. Worth, we couldn't allow those outsiders to run the whole show," exclaimed Bertie, "we really couldn't." As the others spoke in the same tone, it would have appeared to a stranger that fighting the Western and Playfellow was as easy as kite-flying or dominoes.

Later Catherine said to Helen, "You have helped John and my father greatly, and I shall remember."

"Why, Catherine," answered Helen, "we must protect our class. For ever since the day your husband fixed our motor-car I knew he was a democrat and not a snob. I like him and so does Neil, and as for your grim, determined father, why he used to toddle me on his knee and bring me dolls, then chocolates, and later he used to scold. So you see the men folk had to fall in line and help; there wasn't anything else to do."

When Catherine told her father what had been decided upon, he kissed his daughter and said, "Good little girl; I have been trying for a year to move those people, and now you, at a stroke, accomplish it."

"But, father, it was Helen — she was so very nice about it all; and does it mean so much?"

"Why, dear, it means that we won't at any rate go down alone, and we have now a chance to win. The fight has been desperately one-sided with Western backing Playfellow."

"Is John home?"

"He telephoned that he would be here at twelve."

"Then good night, father."

CHAPTER XIX

NEIL MANNERING TAKES A HAND

LURGAN went back to his easy-chair and began figuring on the news that Catherine had brought home. He saw the clever work of his daughter and admired her greatly, but he wanted the details, so in the morning he called on Mannering. Afterward he saw King, and after giving him the news said, "Now is your time, Jim, for a big coup in the market. Mannering begins operations to-day, as the Western, by running ghost trains, has broken traffic agreements, and to-morrow you will see a bill in the legislature of Pennsylvania for the new road, and John's name goes on for the franchise. This is owing to his immense popularity in Pittsburg now and elsewhere. It is my opinion that it will pass and be immediately signed by the Governor. At any rate, this move and the sixteen-hour train to Chicago, which goes on the rails to-morrow, will tell the public, and the Western people as well, that there is something up. So sell all along their line; give it to them hot and heavy to-day or before the big break comes."

King smiled and, in his quiet way, began giving selling orders. In half an hour Wall Street knew that King was making a gigantic raid on the market. Playfellow, not suspecting Midland's move, bought heavily to protect the market, and by sheer weight of coin kept the stocks up.

But again the next morning King was selling and the

stocks that he was hammering began to decline, as all the newspapers had the story of the coming Worth franchise and Midland's first traffic move. When it became definitely known that Midland was behind Worth in the new railroad, there was a terrible panic, and King smilingly said to Lurgan, "We can keep the oil pot boiling on their money for another spell."

"Jim, you are magnificent."

"With the information you gave me, the game was easy, so I went in up to our entire limit."

Playfellow now pulled every wire he could control to keep Midland quiet, and had Marvin, president of the Western, who was called "The Red," on account of his long red beard and red face, come to New York by special train. He called at once on the president of the Midland, his long nose looking like a beak, and cried angrily, "Do you mean to fight?"

Before this he had intimidated the president of the Midland and thought to do so again this morning, but he was answered in these words: "Mannering has assumed charge. He is in the next room and, Marvin, I suggest that you alter your manner when you meet him."

The president of the Western, very hot and unpleasant looking, then strode into Mannering's office and shouted, "What does this mean?"

Mannering answered quietly, "You have broken your agreements in every way. I have here a list of your transgressions"; and passing over the paper he continued, "Please tell me about these items, Marvin."

After reading the paper, Marvin exclaimed, "You are not giving me the truth in these charges."

Mannering flushed slowly and said, "They are all true, as I can prove, and you are a liar if you deny them again."

Pale with passion the Western's representative jumped up and exclaimed, "I will make you pay for that!"

"I have heard of your insolence before while under this roof. Now I purpose forcing a polite president on Western or I'll turn the road inside out, and I won't stop until all your directors vote a rebate to the John Worth Bank equaling the money of which you have robbed them by these dirty tricks of yours to help Playfellow. Now go."

"Mr. Mannering, give me a minute," entreated Marvin, in fear.

"Go, I say, or I'll throw you out."

The president of the Western slunk out, feeling like a whipped cur, and to him the hell of it was that he knew Mannering's written statement was a true bill. But how he had gotten all those facts bothered Marvin. He was not aware then that his secretary had sold the items to Harold Tyndale, Worth's lawyer, for a small fortune, so he went to the master of his destiny, Playfellow, and told of his interview.

"You have messed things, Marvin, for as I get your story, you told him he was not telling the truth. Now that was hardly the way to begin the conversation."

"I was angry when I saw that list and consequently lost my temper. But he called me a liar, and I wouldn't stand for that."

"Oh, but you must apologize and square things somehow, as we can't fight the Midland over that rascal Worth."

"What about the rebates," cried Marvin, "especially as our directors don't know about these items? I tell you we must fight long enough to hush that matter up."

This was a polite slap at Playfellow, for if the directors of the Western should learn of the crooked work it would

mean his immediate retirement, and also that of his creature, Marvin. So Playfellow, for the first time in his life, allowed an important matter to drift, and in less than a week the biggest railroad fight in the country's history was under way. There could be no doubt as to the result of this particular fight, because it was well known that the Midland held a tremendous amount of money for working capital in its own bank in New York. This had also been the policy of the Western at one time, but after Playfellow secured control he had cut down the road's balance to bare necessities, and they were in no condition to keep up a protracted fight without calling on the stockholders for money. The Western's allied roads were in no better condition as to working capital than the Western itself, so the public considered the Western's chances of success to be very small.

This, too, was the opinion of the directors and large stockholders of the Western, who were told by Marvin that Midland was responsible for the row. "It will be all over in a month so we needn't worry," he answered. "In the meantime I'll make another cut in rates all around, so that they will know that we are not to be bulldozed."

Marvin and Playfellow thought that a short, stubborn fight would bring the old families who controlled Midland to their knees, and that their crooked work would be covered up in peace negotiations; but they did not know Neil Mannering, the aforetime university athlete, known to the Johnnies as the black giant of Lockyear College.

The business of fighting for the great power that he once held was now occupying all Playfellow's thoughts, and as the months dragged on he realized that the end meant bankruptcy for some one. He had a great hope that he could pull through, but on the day when hope

was strong and every indication pointed to success, a short, broad-shouldered, strong-faced man of sixty, who had been president of the Western prior to Marvin, arrived in New York from England and immediately called on Mr. Mannering at his office.

After announcing him, the secretary said, "Mr. Mannering will be pleased to see you, sir. Walk right in."

"How do you do, Mr. Cassman. I'm glad to see you; sit down. What's the news?"

"Thanks for your courtesy, Mr. Mannering. I was told that you wouldn't speak to a Western man."

"I'm always glad to see a gentleman."

And, judging by the happy smile that lit up his face, Cassman was pleased with the compliment, for he said, "My story is a short one, but important; that is, important to me. As you know I am a large stockholder in the Western and I wrote for particulars of this distressing railroad war. I was told that the fault was in you. Now I knew your father well, and have known you from a boy, so I ask if that statement is true."

Opening a drawer in his desk, Neil pulled out a package of papers and said, "Look these over carefully and you will be able to answer your own question."

And when Cassman had done so he exclaimed, "I expected something of this sort, so I am not greatly surprised. But tell me, how did you come by Marvin's original orders and his private account?"

"They were purchased by the John Worth Bank and then handed to me. I was told by Harold Tyndale, Worth's lawyer, that there was no promise as to secrecy, so I know they came from Marvin's secretary, who is now in Paris. I was also told by Tyndale that I could give these papers to the press if I wished. In other

words, the John Worth Bank doesn't mind its share in this transaction seeing the light. I was prepared to talk sensibly to Marvin, but he came in like an enraged bull, so I gave him the door and you know the rest."

"May I have copies of these papers?"

"You may take the originals after you initial copies which I have."

"Thank you, and now, Mr. Mannering, I don't mind telling you that I was forced from the presidency of the Western by Playfellow, who thought that my betterment account was too great. You see I was aiming for the best road in America, and this meant spending a lot of money; and as he was then at the zenith of his power he had no trouble influencing the other directors against me. So I resigned. Now," and Cassman tapped the papers Mannering had given him, "it's my turn. I propose to call an extraordinary general meeting and I think that in a few days we shall have peace."

"I have a condition or two, Mr. Cassman."

"And those are?"

"Mr. Marvin must leave the road, Playfellow and Hodges the directorate, and a settlement be made with John Worth."

"The first two I think I can promise, but as to Worth I am not so sure; it's hard to fix compensation."

"I see the difficulty, but it must be overcome before I open peace negotiations."

"Is he hard?"

"As nails."

"Why are you so much interested in him?"

"I like his fight, and likewise the man, but that is not all. I mean to crush rebates. We have never been in that business ourselves, but we have suffered from it. At

any rate I won't stop this war until I am satisfied that every one, rich or poor, hereafter shall get a fair show. It's the Marvins and Playfellows that are driving the people to think about Government ownership of railroads."

"I see your point; any other condition?"

"Yes, all this, right down to our eventual agreement, must be made public. I am sorry if you think this needlessly harassing. I regard it as imperative, not from the point of view of a conqueror, but to show the public that we are having a general house-cleaning, preparatory to a clean business conducted on clean lines."

"I truly admire you, Mr. Mannering, and believe in your doctrines. I never permitted a rebate, because I saw not only the unrighteous side to such transactions, but also that rebates would eventually lead to a giant amalgamation which would be a peril in every way, so I take up that condition with pleasure and bid you good day."

"Just a moment; there is a little matter that is not my affair, but I know you will be pleased to hear about it. Your banks are holding Playfellow's notes with rather slim security."

"That makes it easier for me, and I'll look into that at once," answered Cassman, smilingly.

Cassman found all the other large stockholders of Western in a very receptive mood, and when it was learned that oil stock was attached to Playfellow's notes, they began a searching inquiry, and at the general meeting Cassman was elected president.

Playfellow and Hodges, being compelled to withdraw, were told that if they did not lift their notes at once the road would foreclose on their property. This was a

crushing blow, for Playfellow hoped that if his oil company should be compelled to close business he would be left with a great amount of first-class securities. In order to make his notes good he was compelled to disgorge all his Western stock, and others as well. And as all stocks were far below their normal value, and as cash was quite out of the question, Playfellow was forced practically to empty his coffers to meet his obligations.

CHAPTER XX

OIL IN MANY MARKETS

WITH the adjustment of the railroad war Playfellow was left without a shred of reputation, for his means of securing money and his methods of warfare convinced even the more narrow of religious folk that his affectation of regarding the Bible as a daily mental diet was but a bid for popularity and a cloak to hide his iniquity. And now, too, it was rumored that the mighty money citadel was weakening, as Worth, through his Washington connections, made the bank examiners very active. Many of the Playfellow loans were "called" and, moreover, these were from banks which he controlled, so it was plain that he was being driven into a corner. What vexed him most was the fact that he could not get at the John Worth Bank through an examiner to see if he could retaliate against Lurgan and Worth, for no way was found to attack a strictly private concern.

So he raged at the cords which began to tighten about him, but had he only known that Lurgan, King, and Worth had about reached their limit, his joy would have been uncontrollable, for, though seriously crippled financially, he still had some bonds and a large amount of gold to his credit in the Unit National. But he could get no positive information as to their financial standing, and began to think of his early career and the means he then used to get rid of persons who bothered him. He did

not dare think of the assassin because such recollections made him shiver, for he well remembered Worth's words, and a mistake such as Pike had made would mean his own death.

And this was also the belief of Hodges, only in a more marked degree. He felt that he was ticketed and labeled for death and spent many hours in the gymnasium where he worked hard, for he was still in robust health and well under fifty. But in the evenings, and especially in bed at night, he knew his efforts to gain additional strength would be of no avail, as he fully realized that he was not, and never had been, a match for John Worth, man to man.

As there was no income from his oil stock, Hodges was now living on a salary and in a small flat. He had been compelled to sell everything to meet the calls that Playfellow made on those who held an interest in the Oil company, and was now getting his first feel of a world that he did not know. But he would have willingly accepted privations if he could have seen hope ahead, but he did not see that, he saw only John Worth. And a sixth sense told him that he was to suffer, and this feeling took such a hold upon him that he grew physically and morally afraid even to meet Worth on the street. Whenever their eyes met he read the desire of the brute in John, and now he knew that it was only a question of time when he would be compelled to look into the face of the man whose father had been killed by his hirelings.

He often thought of writing to Worth the plain, naked truth of his connection with that matter, and many times he began the confession; but there was David. How was he going to answer the question about him? Any falsehood about that suggested fear, but reason said:

"He will not be satisfied with assertions, nor will he be satisfied with the story you are going to tell about his father's death. He is not one to condone or forgive." Then the heart, pumping red blood for a moment, said, "Fight him"; but soon fear would still that voice and cry, "Go away with what you have and find some haven of retreat in an unknown country." But to this reason would reply, "He will find you while you cumber the earth, and make you pay for their lives with yours. Death is too fleeting a pleasure for hate such as his, so he will make you suffer and then he will kill."

Playfellow, also, was doing an unusual amount of thinking, but on straighter lines, as he possessed none of these small qualities which made it hard for Hodges to view with equanimity the morning of another day. Playfellow was pondering fires and their possibilities. He had already used the midnight torch on bubbling wells to great advantage, and as personal violence was barred, why not do something even more thorough than a single death? Following his brave thoughts, he saw the Worth refineries destroyed. "But they could be built again," cried caution, and to this the brain of Playfellow answered, "I will also break him at the same time, and then he must come to terms, if I do not in the meantime get his secret."

Accordingly he said to Hodges one day, "We must smash him at once or we will go down before them. I can't hold out another six months; the whole world seems against me."

After these words Playfellow knelt in his office and prayed eloquently for success. He cried to the Almighty, "I trust in You"; and then feeling more normal he said to Hodges, "From what you have told

me from time to time about Heenan and his child I gather that you can at any time take his place in delivering the midnight meal."

Hodges, not understanding, answered, "Sharp and I have been up to the door of the refinery many times with them, but it is quite impossible to get in."

"You could set fire to the mill, though?"

Now Hodges saw the drift of Playfellow's other remark and cried, "That would be crazy, for what do we accomplish by destroying the place? Of course you know that he can rebuild that wooden structure, or all of them, in three months. Besides I feel certain that they would welcome a fire which would give them another excuse for delaying deliveries."

"I see that side, but I want to know definitely if you can set fire to the deodorizing refinery."

"I can. As you know, I have kept in with Heenan. As we are of a height, and as it is easy to assume lameness; his girl has many times escorted me to the mill. And I have also gone with both of them and with Sharp as well. It would be only a question of price, as Heenan, being blind and lame, is desperately anxious to arrange his child's future."

"What is she like?"

"A good-looking blonde with rather a timid face, who will help all she can because she is anxious to get back to New York. But with all her silliness she is fond of her father and will do what he says."

"I see the type!" exclaimed Playfellow. "And I can see the father; five thousand would do it, eh?"

"Now you are wrong; the girl is perhaps a bit flighty and wild, but the father is very sane and hard. You will have to multiply your figure ten times to get him."

"But you can get in without him, so why not pay him after the event?"

"That is so," cried Hodges, with gladness. "I'll just make an ordinary trip, eh, to see if I can get a look inside of the deodorizing mill?"

"Of course," smiled Playfellow. "Tell me, what does Sharp know?"

"It was he who discovered Heenan; in fact he knew him well at one time. And if it is agreeable to you, I'll take him with me, as there are a few things to think about in getting out and he may prove useful." Surmising that the work which Playfellow had suggested was to be done at once, in order to show why he wanted assistance, he continued, "The Worth property, or American oil as they call it, contains about sixty acres and has only two exits, one by water and the other by land. The water exit is closed at night and, as you have read, the whole property is surrounded by a canal and consequently is isolated from the rest of the meadows. On the outside bank of the canal there is a high, strong, electrically charged wire fence, so it's impossible to get to the refineries except by one of the roads I have mentioned; and each refinery inside of this circle is isolated from the others by waterways.

"In other words, the most extraordinary precautions have been taken against the weapon which you have named, and in their precautions they have, as well, built up their system of handling goods with the least possible labor, as canals large enough for barges run to each refinery. Now the particular refinery that we want to burn is at the extreme end of this property, or near the water entrance. Consequently I must find my way over considerable distance before I can get out, as, of course,

I must get to the road entrance as quickly as possible. Otherwise I am in danger, not only from the fire but from the men who work at night, and they total quite a number.

"There are others who live at 'The Pipe,' or the only place where the workmen are permitted to smoke, and this building, a big one, is pretty well filled all the time. I tell you this because I must pass it on my way out, and I leave you to imagine what they will do if I am caught."

"What protection have they against fire?"

"Only great care, as, of course, nothing can stop an oil fire."

"How does Heenan get through the gate?"

"He is the gate man and that explains why it is so easy for me to enter. And now here is where Sharp and one or two others will be useful, as I may be stopped at this point on my way out, for beyond this gate, on the high ground, nearly all the people who work in the different refineries live. You must remember that long before I reach the gate the fire will be known and the alarm given, and the men and women outside will flock to the gate. I, of course, expect to reach the gate before those who are outside do, but I shall be one of the last to get there from the inside. In running I may be noticed, not by the limp to which I will adhere, but I shall be going entirely too straight for a blind man. If Sharp is with me, crying, 'Fire — fire,' it will help, and if some one is outside with an automobile near by, we ought to pull through all right, especially if I have Sharp to help."

Playfellow, in his mind's eye, saw the fire and was thinking that on the eventful night he would secure a good coign of vantage from which to enjoy it, and this thought held him to silence, for he liked the picture that

he conjured up. But the active agent was anxious to get things settled, so he broke the silence by asking, "When do we make the blaze? I'm ready any time."

With a start Playfellow awoke from his sweet dream.

"I, of course, see with you the uselessness of this fire as such, so here is the rest of my scheme," answered the elder man, rubbing his bald head. "For profound secrecy, and for what I want done intelligently, you must start for England immediately" (Hodges blushed with pleasure at the first great compliment Playfellow had ever paid him), "and give my instructions to Marsh, our London agent. And here they are. He is to proceed at once to Italy and, through a bank, order five hundred thousand barrels of deodorized oil from Worth. Pay any price that is asked, and, if necessary, arrange for payments to Worth in New York. Then he must go to Austria, Germany, France, and then home to England, and in these countries arrange as outlined for Italy. But if the Italian order is accepted he must place a bigger one for Austria, and if that goes through, a larger one for France, and then something colossal for England.

"In each country a blind company ought to be organized, to make it appear that an active fight is going to be conducted against us, and an item to this effect given to the Associated Press. Do you understand so far?"

"Perfectly"; and, smiling, Hodges added, "I see hope ahead."

"Now," said Playfellow, "comes the important item. Contract only for deodorized oil to be delivered in three months. Put a penalty clause equal to the price we pay, for failure to deliver that which is called for in the contract — deodorized oil. In order to get this clause in as strong as you can word it, tell Marsh to pay the price asked and,

after the Italian contract is signed, to use the cable only. He is to get the banks he uses to do all their work with their correspondents in New York by cable, and I will arrange his credit with the Bank of England to cover all these purchases. I want all the contracts you make to fall due about the same time. After you are sure that Marsh understands thoroughly what is required of him, come home for the conflagration."

Hodges, jumping up from his chair, cried, "You are still the greatest man living."

"Glad you like the idea," replied Playfellow, happily. "I want you, of course, to go to Italy with Marsh, so as to advise him properly on the first contract, which will be, no doubt, the basis for the others. The Worth Company are poor and will bite at these rich offers, and then we have them."

Playfellow laughed at the prospect and walked up and down the room, his tall form quaking with suppressed joy.

On Saturday Thomas Hodges sailed for England, and in two weeks he was in Italy with Marsh, arranging the details for a company. A bank was approached and in due course a letter was sent to John Worth, and this reached Harold Tyndale, who was much amazed at the extent of the order. Never before had they received a request for so many barrels, and Tyndale, being a careful man, read again the letter, which was written in English, but paused at the clause, "If our experts pass the oil as deodorized we shall cable the money to New York." These words, "our experts," struck him as odd and made him study the letter word for word. In re-reading it through he detected an eagerness which puzzled him, but the last paragraph was to the point, as they had requested an answer by cable, as on an acceptance they

would request their correspondents in New York to call and make the contract.

So Tyndale wired, raising the regular European price twenty-five cents per barrel and stipulating that an expert, chosen by both, was to go with oil from America, and if their bank were found to be satisfactory the Worth Company would agree to deliver the oil in fourteen weeks at Genoa. The following afternoon a man from Wall Street called, and in two days a contract, drawn up by Tyndale, was signed. When Willie Radley received all the papers he found also an agreement with a steamship company carrying the delay penalties of the Italian Bank, providing the oil in barrels was docked at New York in ten weeks. Willie then sent an order to the works in the meadows, and as John had heard of the large shipment he prepared for its fulfilment.

Within a week Tyndale had closed a German contract for one million barrels at one dollar and fifty cents per barrel, and then the French order came in, and on its heels a huge one from England. John was called in to look at these. Tyndale interrupted his thoughts sufficiently to say, "Odd, isn't it? They take the experts we name, and the manager of the Midland Bank says that the Bank of England guarantees payment on the lot. As I have told you before, Hodges was in Europe. He is now on his way home."

"As everything is in order, sign," replied John; and then he went to his room and by long-distance telephone called up his Lake Superior manager, saying, "I am leaving for the mill to-night. Put full force on; four six-hour shifts." And then he called up every barrel mill in the country and by night had contracted for several million barrels.

That evening he left by special train for Lake Superior and shipped from there five hundred barrels of water to his own oil wells. After finding out definitely what this factory could do he stopped at other points where he was having barrels made. Coming back to New York he said to Tyndale, "I have the barrels all right and I find letters from Texas confirming their wires as to oil, so you can begin arranging dates for the shipping companies you have contracted with, as we shall be able to keep the schedule upon which they have insisted."

John went home exhausted, for his days and nights had been spent under a terrible strain and, knowing well the ways of Playfellow and Hodges, he was certain that some coup was pending. But he made no move other than to see if all refineries were following closely his instructions as to escape in case of fire. When satisfied on this point he smiled grimly and awaited developments, feeling sure that their scheme would come to a head when his yards were choked with oil. He was under the impression that the time of his return from his own oil wells, for which he intended to leave the next day, would see something that would add zest to life.

But John had not figured well the activity of Playfellow, who said to Hodges immediately after John's return, "Can you do it to-night?"

"The sooner the better for me," answered Hodges, feverishly.

Keen-eyed Playfellow saw that Hodges was bolstering his nerves by strong drink, but he said nothing about the ill effects of alcohol, which he had so often related to young men, for he well knew that the more sense was deadened the better the job would be done. After walking up and down the floor he said to Hodges, "If you pull this off

to-night, Tom, I'll allow you fifty thousand a year to live on, and hand you back your stock as well."

Hodges, shaking with pleasure at being called by his first name, as well as on account of the magnificent offer, for he was now wholly at the mercy of Playfellow for living wage, cried, "I'll do it! and listen — Heenan and his daughter will remain behind!" And with those words Hodges moved his face into a leer at which the seams stood out, giving him a diabolical appearance.

"That's the idea," chortled Playfellow, "dead people don't peach! Muffled up so that I can't be recognized, I'll go to the palisades in Jersey and watch the fire. It will fill me with deep joy, and with the first fork of light on my knees I shall give thanks to God."

CHAPTER XXI

FLAMES OF YELLOW GOLD

WHEN the two conspirators parted, Hodges went directly to Sharp's room, where that worthy saluted him with, "Hello, Tom, how are we?" And this familiarity brought home to Hodges how far he had fallen; but he was too politic to take offense and at once proceeded to outline the work for the night.

"Let me say first that I'm game," asserted Bill, "for I well see that something out of the ordinary must be done to wind up the Worth crowd. But it's a desperate undertaking and I only go to save my stock and my business."

With a note of anxiety in his voice Hodges cried, "Why is it desperate, Bill? I see the danger, of course, but not the extreme risk that you intimate."

"We have to make a good half mile to the gate and there'll be a light such as never existed before, thrown on our every move long before we reach safety."

"I admit that, too, but there will be many others running with us."

"That's sure, but —"

"Not afraid are you, Bill?" interrupted Hodges.

"Yes, I am; but as I said before, I'll do it."

"I suppose Heenan and the girl are to be trusted," remarked Hodges.

"No trouble there," replied Bill, "as the girl wants to go on the stage and our money has been educating her."

"Why does Worth keep them?"

"Heenan was a mechanic at one time, but it galls him to live on charity, for that is what his position amounts to. And naturally he hates the man who's kind to him."

"Let us meet in Newark at eleven at the old rendezvous."

Bill nodded his willingness, and at a little before twelve, having concealed their automobile in some bushes close to the entrance of Worth's property, they walked to the gate-house. Bill, dressed in old clothes, asked for Heenan, and when he came out into the night, Bill said, "My partner wants to try again." And as that heretofore had meant one hundred dollars to Heenan, he answered, "All right, wait until I get Lizzy." In a few moments all four were walking toward the big mill, and when they were close to it, Lizzy went forward to the door and rapped, a pleasant smile on her face. This was because Walter Peace, the head electrician, had frequently of late made love to her, and it was her custom to stop and talk to him until her father called.

Their conversation was carried on through a sliding door about a foot square, and this small aperture did not look directly into the mill but on another door which, when it was not locked, was kept closed by strong springs. The hole was too small to permit the man inside to see anything but what was directly in front of him, which was the vaseline factory. Peace, consequently, did not see the others, and Hodges kept the old man talking at the corner of the mill until Bill ran up, saying, "Let us hurry." This meant that he had started a fire where the barrels were hoisted by wire ropes over the canal to the receiving door located high above the ground, for considerable oil was splashed down the sides of the

building at this point. It was washed clean every week by Playfellow's kerosene so that the smell would be detected in the air. As this oil arrived in Worth's own barrels and in carloads, no one suspected but that it was oil to be deodorized. This part of the building was soaking with inflammable material, and Sharp had no difficulty in igniting it. His hope was that all would get well on their way out before the fire was discovered.

But Hodges had different plans. As he was strong and burly and afraid only of one man, and that man was not present, after Heenan had called to his daughter, he promptly knocked him down with a stout stick which he carried. Then he rushed for Lizzy, who was standing inert, spellbound at his action. But just before the blow on her head choked off all utterance, she screamed, "Walter," and the cry, though stifled, was loud enough to reach her lover's ears just as he was about to close the second door.

He ran to the sliding door but could see nothing, so began to undo the bolts; then he thought he heard a slight roar and the crackling of wood. Opening the door he ran to the corner nearest the canal, and there he saw a sheet of flame spreading over the whole side of the building. In a moment he realized that nothing could be done to save the building, so he rushed back to the door and, entering quickly, in a hoarse voice screamed, "Fire — fire! Hurry, hurry!" Then remembering Worth's instructions, he pulled down hard a lever which rang a bell in all the factories, and in Worth's house, four miles away. As his companions were rushing out, he followed, and in making for the main road at a run he stumbled over a body on the ground which he recognized as that of Lizzy. Promptly picking her up, by the fierce

light he saw that she was apparently dead. He rained kisses upon her face as he called wildly, "Lizzy, Lizzy!" but no answer came. Driven on by the heat, he started up the long road with the girl in his arms. He was a strong, bull-necked young fellow and for a time managed fairly well, but soon the weight began to tell and he had to stop and rest for a few seconds. Then he would make another hundred yards and rest again. At this third halt he felt that he was walking in an oven and soon he would have to give up — not the girl, for Peace was not built upon those lines. He was only a plain mechanic, proud and forceful like his class, and with unbounded courage, and he loved this girl, so he struggled, hoping to reach the main street where he could be seen from the hill.

Had she been a stranger he probably would have left her to be licked up by the flames, but his love made him strong and, crushing her to him, he kissed her again and hoarsely gasped, "We die together, Lizzy, but not yet — not yet." So he pressed on, ever on, hoping to reach the long, wide street that ran directly through the property from the gate. But he was reeling now and felt that he was being actually baked. Glancing back he saw a hell on earth, as now the other mills had caught fire, but he struggled on, grim and determined. Rounding a corner, he sighted the great crowd on the hill watching the flames, but he realized by the suffocating heat and the awful roar so close upon him that man could not succor him. He felt his mind giving way; still he gritted his teeth and stumbled on a yard or two. At last he reeled and fell to the earth.

The dreaded fire alarm had brought out every employee of the oil works, and its clanging noise spurred Hodges and Sharp to run as fast as they could, but they were not the

first ones at the gate, for when they reached the opening it was jammed by those who lived on the hill close by, seeking to be of assistance. In the mêlée Hodges lost his soft hat and, as he was a well-known character, and very tall, he was observed by many who at first thought that he must be merely a passing stranger. If he had kept his nerve he would, perhaps, have gotten through the mass of people without being recognized, but unfortunately for himself he put his hand before his face to hide it, and this was a fatal move, for a man close to him said, "Why do you hide your face?" Then the hand was roughly pulled down and the same man, turning to the crowd said, "Fellows, who is this?"

"Why, it looks like Hodges," one cried, and then Strong Tom and Bill tried by bull strength to force their way out. But they were soon overpowered and the crowd, fiercely angry now, wanted to trample out Hodges' life. When Sharp saw what was intended, he cried to his captors, who were beginning to handle him roughly, "I am a relation of Heenan's and when he comes he will tell you so."

Bill felt satisfied that he would never be called a liar by Heenan, and as his excuse seemed to work well, he used strong language in proving his statement and consequently he was not molested. The Worth people knew all about Hodges and his career, and were familiar with the David Worth story, so they cried, "Let's burn him"; and that idea seemed to please the crowd, but the superintendent cried aloud, "Say, fellows, Worth will be here soon. He is home to-night, so wait until he comes."

As John's name carried a great deal of weight with the workmen, they took Hodges and Sharp up the hill to await Worth's coming.

John had overworked and could not sleep, so at twelve he partly dressed and went downstairs to look over some important papers, thinking that a little work might make him sleepy. He had only just comfortably settled himself in his chair when he was startled by the fire-bell. Jumping up, he rushed to his automobile and in a marvelously short time was going at full speed toward the meadows. He reached the gate in a few minutes, and was getting out when he heard a great moan from the crowd. Looking down he saw a figure, carrying another, fall in the street of fire. Shouting, "Clear the way," he started at full speed his slowing engines, and soon he had the two senseless forms in his car. Then reversing his lever, he was quickly out of the parching heat into the cool of the hill. A great shout welcomed the chauffeur from his desperate dash into the street of fire.

An old gray-haired mechanic, with tears running down his face, cried, "Like his father to-night. Aye, much like big, swarthy Peter. And I knew the goliath David, too. I tell you boys, it's in the blood. You just can't scare 'em."

John had jumped from his automobile after rescuing Peace and Lizzy; and was now looking at Hodges and Bill Sharp, who were bound in cords. After a moment he said to the cursing, maddened crowd, "Who captured these men?"

A shout of "We did," was his answer, and Worth smiled as he bent down and said to Hodges in a honeyed voice, "One fire too many!"

"How are your patients?" John asked of the doctor.

"Peace is coming around, but Lizzy is still insensible. The blow was a nasty one."

"Blow? She was hit then?"

"Her whole scalp is cut open, and if it wasn't for her thick hair she would be dead."

"Anybody else hurt?"

"Not that I'm aware of."

His plucky ride into the sea of flame did not lessen John's popularity with the hands, who were correspondingly enraged against the two men whom they held responsible for the disaster, for all were now certain how the fire had started. So while the flames raged from refinery to refinery they stood in sullen determination about the house where Hodges and Sharp were tied.

After some time had passed, they saw Lizzy Heenan being carried into the house. Here, after she had been placed in a chair, she said to John in a weak voice, "My father took both Mr. Hodges and Mr. Sharp into the works as he had done many times before. Each time they gave him one hundred dollars. I guess they hoped to get a look inside of the refinery where the oil is changed. He did not know, nor did I, what they were going to do to-night. I saw Mr. Hodges strike father down with a club, afterwards he struck me on the head, and I can't remember any more." After a pause she went on, "Oh, God is punishing me!" Quickly falling on her knees, she cried, "Oh, Mr. Worth, forgive me, won't you?"

And John, picking her up, said, "Don't worry, child; I forgive you freely, and will look after you hereafter."

The girl sobbed in the strong arms of Worth, and a man inside, who had heard what the girl said, told those outside. Then some oil was sent for, and the snarl of the men, like that of enraged animals, reached the ears of Hodges, who shivered from his heart, while Sharp turned pale as death.

The superintendent said to John, "This man," pointing

to Sharp, "says he and Heenan were cousins. Ask the girl." Lizzy, who heard the assertion, cried, "He told a lie, thinking we were both dead." Then John carried Lizzy out and said, "Who will take this girl to my home?"

And Peace, now fairly recovered, answered, "I'll look after her, Mr. Worth."

Then a voice exclaimed, "Make way for Mrs. Worth," and Catherine and her father met John, who was still holding Lizzy. Catherine said, "Send her home with Tony. The servants are all up, and the house is ready to take care of the wounded. How terrible the fire is! But are you hurt, John? Your hair seems singed and your face blistered."

"I'm all right, and glad to say that every one is here except the old gatekeeper." But John was wrong, as he was to find out later that three others had perished in the fire.

Lurgan passed inside and saw Hodges tied to a table and Sharp to a chair. John, calling him to one side, said, "Get Catherine home as soon as you can. There is going to be trouble here soon, but don't tell her that or she won't go."

"I think," said Lurgan, looking at Hodges and Sharp, "that I see the trouble, so I'll take her. But is everything gone?"

"Yes; all the buildings and their contents."

And Lurgan, calling Catherine, said, "Let's go home and look after that girl. There is no one else that requires attention."

"Are you sure, father?"

"Quite sure, dear, and besides we should only hamper John by remaining."

"Oh, father, did you notice how strong he looked, standing among his men? His firm head, his fine shoulders and height, and the details of dress, seem to throw his figure out. I always shall see the burnt shirt and blistered skin, for they made me realize the superintendent's thrilling story of his ride into the white heat to save two of his people."

But the old man remained silent, for he saw beyond the fire and the prospect made him sad. Catherine, noting the silence, exclaimed, "What is it, father?"

"Ruin! For now we can't fill those large European orders."

Catherine put her arm about her father and said, "Let us put our trust in God," and they walked to their conveyance.

Looking back, Catherine saw as if at noonday the great crowd about the house that held her husband, and she asked her father what they were doing. She had not gone into the house and had not seen Hodges. "Oh, father! Listen! They are calling the roll."

"Yes, dear, to see if any are missing; but let us hurry, as that little girl will need you."

In front of the house a timekeeper had mounted a rude platform and had begun calling the names of those on the pay sheets. Inside, sitting around a table, were John, the superintendent, and the foremen of the different mills. And when the timekeeper began to call the night watch, John said to those who were standing by, "Unloose the roped men." The criminals were made to sit in a corner of the room by themselves, while outside the timekeeper called loudly the names from his tally sheets. He was stopped by a wail at the names of Tobsenello, and he cried again, "Robert and Chid Tobsenello." There was

now a cry as from a lost soul. "My boys — my boys! I must see the master."

The crowd made way for the frenzied woman. She fell upon her knees and cried in wailing tones, "Master — master — my boys — my boys! They were at 'The Pipe.'" Seeing Sharp, she jumped to her feet, her dark eyes flashing fire, and screamed, "There's the hell-hound who bought my father to murder yours, John Worth."

Sharp sank into his chair, a gleam of hatred in his eyes, and said insolently, "You're raving!"

The woman was going to speak, but John interrupted her. "Not now, Mrs. Tobsenello. Wait." Motioning a man at the door, the timekeeper proceeded with the list.

Those inside presently heard a splashing on the sides and roof of the house as if the men were throwing buckets of water on the building. But Sharp, who could see a number of faces in an open window, realized that the walls were being soaked with oil and not water. The other windows framed faces in the same way, but none gave ground at the deluge of oil, as they were there eagerly watching the proceedings and Hodges and Sharp as well, and the dripping oil did not affect them in the least.

At the name of Weldon the timekeeper stopped again and another harrowing scene occurred, and at the last name, Mrs. Weldon and Mrs. Tobsenello were sitting side by side in the house. Then John said, "Three are missing."

Turning to Hodges he said, "Have you anything to say?"

Strong Tom, looking into John's eyes, saw something that made him fear. Still there was one chance for his life and he took advantage of it and began his narrative, a

stenographer taking down what he said. When it was transcribed and read aloud, Hodges said, "That's the whole truth, and I'll sign it," and coming forward quickly, he did so.

"I don't care for that instrument, Hodges," John declared, with a terrible calmness, "and if you think it is going to help you in any way, you are very much at sea. You can tear the paper up. I know now that Playfellow is back of all this."

Hodges was now in a mortal terror, for the men sitting around the table smiled grimly at Worth's words, and those in the window laughed gratingly.

"What had you to do with my father's death?"

Again Hodges spoke the truth, the words trembling on his lips.

"Now tell me who murdered my uncle"; and Hodges, mopping his brow, told that story.

"Then the knife was for me."

"Y-e-s."

"And you killed Heenan to-night and tried to kill his daughter. You are a brave man, Hodges," sneered John. "Now, Mr. Sharp, what have you to say?"

"Nothing," cried Bill.

"Hodges says you set fire to the mill."

Still Sharp remained silent.

"It may please you to know that Mrs. Tobsenello was the daughter of the bandit that you hired to abduct me. I discovered her about six years ago, and, as you see, she remembers you perfectly. I may also add that I traced Pike some time ago, and found that he had left a rather interesting family in Oil City, where he was a pillar of the church. But unfortunately no money was found, although he was known to be fairly well off, and his

family and little ones have been cared for by their mother, a good woman. Why didn't you look after these people?"

Still there was no answer, and John continued, "It would have been much better every way for you if you had, for I bought their little house when it was put up at auction, and found that Pike, like his family, was interesting, too, for he kept a diary. And I got possession of this by deeding back the house to Mrs. Pike. My man, Tony, photographed Pike the night he was killed, and I then noted the smell of oil on his clothes; so when I could afford the luxury of a sleuth," and here John smiled knowingly at Sharp, "I engaged Tony and sent him into the oil regions, first getting an artist to sketch Pike's face, for Tony's photograph, taken on the night Pike killed my uncle, was not the kind to invite sympathetic attention, if I may put it that way. But the artist did fairly well, because, with his conception, Tony found Pike's family and it was he who got the diary. As Mrs. Pike did not fully understand the fires or the death entries, she thought, good soul, that her husband, being a great reader of dime novels, was merely keeping track of the murders and fires of fiction. But the diary also contained many entries or orders from you. All of these were mandates to kill. I have traced many and found that Pike did his work well. It was too bad he slipped into my uncle's grasp, eh?"

Sharp now almost cried out in his fear, for Worth's short laugh was much more terrible than any curse that he had ever heard. And now, Bill, in his fear was going to speak, but John rose and said, "We have listened to enough in Hodges' speech. Let us go out into the good air." And then the faces at the window smiled

grimly and men came in and poured oil on the floor. When John had gone others boarded and nailed the windows securely. Hodges and Sharp meanwhile watched these preparations with wild, dilated eyes.

At the door John said to the two women, "To-morrow you will receive deeds to the houses you are living in, and our cashier will allow you thirty dollars a month to live on." And when they tried to thank him he said gently, "No thanks, please; you are merely receiving from the mills what is your due."

"Then you're going to build again?" asked Mrs. Weldon.

"Of course," John replied.

Outside he saw the expectant crowd still sweltering in the frightful heat that came from the meadows, for now the yards which held thousands of barrels of oil were on fire. Men had tried to play the hose on these great stacks of barrels, but the intense heat had driven them away. It was three o'clock and soon the sun would be up.

Playfellow, from his high altitude on the Palisades, had seen the first tongue of flame, followed by a dense mass of smoke that gathered and gathered in the still night air. With joy heretofore unknown to his being, he saw the gigantic ring in the heavens, ever ascending and always increasing. Then the huge tank exploded, and other buildings, as if by magic, added to the awful fury of the burning oil. Sixty acres of ground were now one mass of flame. His soul gloried in the magnificent spectacle of this great sea of fire. Many others now came to this point and looked with awe upon the terrible conflagration.

They saw something so stupendous that their sense was in sorrow. Even children were hushed from accla-

mations of joy, for all knew the Meadows shops; all realized that thousands made their daily bread there, and now how would this army of workmen live? But this aspect of the fire, which saddened all, only added to the fierce pleasure which pervaded the being of Playfellow. As he looked, he hugged himself with delight, nursing the thought, "The Lord has answered my prayer and delivered my enemy into my hands." For three hours he drank in the glorious beauty of the fire. It seemed to him that it was his, and so it was, and in each flame he saw yellow metal running back to his coffers. Every fierce shooting tongue of fire looked to him like a pillar of gold, and in the gloom and murkiness of the dense cloud of smoke which choked the sky he saw the funeral of his enemy, Worth.

And once, through sheer delight, he went down on his knees and prayed. Now the great light was growing less and the sorrowing people were on their way home, speaking in hushed tones, for the glamor of the majestic destruction was still strong on them and they saw nothing beyond the wrecked homes. But Playfellow was untroubled with moral scruples; he saw only the fire and the golden future which the great light had made and, turning to one of the satellites, who accompanied him, he exclaimed in his squeaking voice, as though drunk with joy, "From now on, I once more can put a price on bare existence." And with this delphic utterance he turned and, in grotesque stateliness, walked to his waiting carriage.

And yet, if he had heard John Worth's speech to his people, he would have trembled instead, for at that time John was on the doorstep of the house that held Hodges and Sharp, and back of him were men ready to board up the door.

But the hammer was stayed to hear the man they all loved, because in fair weather or foul he had not changed. In prosperous days he was still the same John Worth they had always known. They had never come within reach of him or known him in an intimate way, either in poverty or prosperity, but he was always their friend, not in words, but in deeds. And to-night they were in great sorrow, for they did not think he would rebuild, and yet they were not at that moment thinking of themselves.

They saw only wanton destruction of the John Worth Mills, the mighty fabrics of a man's genius, now in smoke, and they thirsted for the blood of those who had done the deed. No one doubted but that Hodges and Sharp were to die. The mechanics from the printing works and from the stove and burner factories had joined the oil men and their voices, like those of the men more directly concerned, said, "Death"; just that word. Nothing else was considered.

When John raised his hand for silence, from their knowledge of his kindness many thought that he was going to make a plea for the two men inside. And when he said, "I want to say a few words to you," and then he stopped for a moment to collect his thoughts, in that second Hiram Bidding, a tall New Englander, and a labor leader, exclaimed, "No use, John, it's all settled; I guess they are going to burn all right. It's sort o' fixed that way."

Finding his words, John began, "I am going away to-morrow and will be absent six weeks," and, haltingly, "I am not just sure at the moment how we stand."

But Willie Radley, who had hurried from New York when he heard of the fire, was now on the outer circle of the great mass of human beings and realized what was

worrying John. As an idea had been growing in his mind for the past two weeks, he yelled at the top of his voice, "Don't bother about money, John; we have plenty."

A cheer went up in answer, and then more cries of "William Radley, forever," and John, now assured, went on:

"Monday we shall begin erecting a new plant, so all of you now on the pay-roll will remain there, providing you are willing to help at any or all sorts of work. Your superintendent will make plans to-morrow, but I particularly want you to see that no strangers are allowed near the deodorizing mill. So now we will dismiss work, if you please, and take up the case of the two men inside.

"It may be well for me to state first that I haven't the slightest intention of interfering with their fate. I am, as you have found out, a man who believes in the principles of Government as laid down by our forefathers. I do not want to change the sound principles of liberty that are part of our bone. Twenty years ago labor and capital got on fairly well. Then began to come in the giant amalgamations, and because a profit at any price had to be shown, all sorts of trickery were resorted to in order to pay interest on stock that had no value. Whereas, if the properties had been left to their natural growth, every one concerned would have been better off.

"But if these causes were the only ones they could be adjusted. These outrageous growths of fortunes have demoralized society, and there now exists in America a state of corruption such as is known nowhere else. Even doctors are bribed by drug vendors to use their wares. Servants are bribed to betray their employers' interests, and politician has become a synonym for grafted. As a matter of fact, it is difficult to-day to find a business that

is run honestly, and it's harder still to find a business man who does not strip his employees to the bone. Witness the great institutions throughout the country that are making millions, and witness also the pay they give their workers. We see these institutions always howling for their rights, always playing to the gallery of public opinion by spectacular gifts, and meantime reaching with dirty hands for more money. It is always money, and no matter how it comes, it's money. And so they preach honesty to the poor, yet they all bribe in one form or another to further their ends, and we see the result.

"We see taxes evaded by those with political pulls, as we see political jobs secured by bribery. Other countries can attack such a condition by mandatory laws, but we are bound together by the tie of equality and we can move only through the people themselves. And it is this that permits these rascals to bribe, pillage, and plunder — permits such scourges as Playfellow and Hodges to live, grow, and, by their dastardly methods, to corrupt the morals of a country. Look at to-night's work — three men sent to their Maker because we dare to try to sell the same commodity as that sold by Hodges and Playfellow. These two began to kill my people even in my infancy, and yet you, Hiram Bidding, and perhaps others, think I would raise a hand to save those creatures in there.

"I have always intended to kill Hodges as I intend to destroy Playfellow; they gave me no mercy and I will give them none. To a portion of our community this will sound wrong, but I am not thinking of them to-night, as I did not yesterday and shall not to-morrow. To-night we shall be a law unto ourselves, and so far as I can, I am going to stamp out that which is eating into the vitals

of our country — bribery. The law-breakers shall feel the force of broken laws this night.

“Our printing works, our steel works, and our copper mills are run in the open. We do not bribe, or cheat, or steal. I have lately spoken to the owners of the great independent steel mills, and they are with me in the effort to stamp out this awful curse of purchasing souls.

“I had a talk with Neil Mannering, after his exposure of Playfellow and Marvin, and he showed me orders he had issued to his purchasing agents and others, and I noted with delight that he realizes the ghastly spread of bribery, and that he believes with me that mere talking is useless and that only through fear and discipline can we hope to get back that which was ours before the history of Playfellow was written. The nation knows that this man has killed and pillaged, and yet he remains free. They have seen Congress play with this same bribery. Mechanics, and I am one until I die,” and a hoarse yell greeted these words, “and all intelligent craftsmen, see that if a rich man asks for protection, no matter how flimsy the pretext, he gets policemen by the score, and if one of you should ask for protection you would be ridiculed. And yet your life, under our constitution, is as valuable as any.

“When this oil fight is over and independent companies are working throughout the country, I am going to exert all my influence to cut this cancer from out the body politic, and I say now, let the bribers beware, for they will get no mercy from the associations which I intend to organize. Let those that kill people watch, for I intend to give these creatures the same sort of a deal that they have given, and if you and the others” — and John circled with his arm the north, south, east, and west,

"help, we will exterminate bribery. I think I shall have the money to prosecute this work and I think I possess the courage. Now, men, Hodges is mine, not yours. The other was merely a tool and doesn't figure, except as such, so I alone light this fire."

A hoarse, "No — no, John," was the answer, and many came to the door.

"Hodges is mine, I say. I lost father and uncle through him, so stand back or, by God, I'll brain you."

And those that had come forward to light the fire fell back in fear, for they saw that Worth meant what he said. But at that moment a cry, "They are escaping," was heard from the back of the house, and the crowd rushed in that direction.

But John was first around the corner; but hardly had he turned it when he heard the sharp, quick snap of a revolver. Running, he came to a little group standing about a man who was prone on the grass. John saw that it was Hodges and, raising his eyes, discovered a number of his men disappear in the shadows of the trees and knew that they were after Sharp.

Waving the crowd back, in a voice full of pain John cried, "Who did this?" But there was no answer, as none apparently knew. The faces of all, however, wore a pleased look, and John, seeing the futility of an investigation, called for Tony. It took some time to find him, but when he appeared John said sternly, "Was it you?"

"No, master."

"Do you know anything about it?"

"I know that two men were sitting at the back door with the boards ready to nail up; all the others had gone to the front to hear your speech. Hodges and Sharp must have rushed these two."

"Who were the men?"

"I don't know."

"We will go home now, Tony. Ah, Tyndale, you here?"

"Yes; came over when I saw the fire."

"Jump in and we'll try for a cup of coffee. I wonder who shot Hodges?" and John studied the wheel of his vehicle as if for information.

Tyndale answered calmly, "I wonder."

CHAPTER XXII

WHAT FOLLOWED THE FIRE

WHEN Playfellow arrived at his city residence he said to the footman who was awaiting him, "Call me at ten o'clock and have all the papers for me." Promptly at that hour he was awakened from a splendid dream of yellow gold in columns, and the smile on his face remained until he had finished his breakfast of predigested food, and had selected an easy-chair. He felt a vague perplexity while he ate, just a line of shading wonder as to Hodges' whereabouts, for according to arrangements, his accomplice should have been with him promptly at ten o'clock. Picking up the first newspaper that came to his hand, the front page, wholly devoted to a sketch of the great fire, caught his rapt attention. He saw again the sea of flame and the great ring of smoke, and while he looked the smile on his face deepened.

Then he turned over the page and began to read the reporter's picture, but that palled after a time, as descriptive words seemed tame to the thoughts that were surging through his own brain. Turning to another page, his eyes were now held and he grasped the paper with a tighter hold. His heart began to beat with suffocating rapidity, for the large headlines read, "I Will Destroy Playfellow." In smaller headlines he read that Hodges and Sharp were dead — the one shot, the other knifed.

Rising from his chair he walked up and down the room

in great agitation, and then picked up another paper and yet another, but all bore the same word. Hodges was dead, and again confronted him that line, "I Will Destroy Playfellow." Mastering himself, he read John Worth's speech, and for once in his life he was full of indignation. He thought, "How dare this man threaten my sacred person?" and ringing his bell, he said to the butler, "Call up Walter Bethune and ask him to come to see me at once."

It was odd, perhaps, that Playfellow should ask for one of New York's most celebrated lawyers, for Bethune was that, and yet with his reputation he possessed a very shady record. Playfellow had first come in contact with him when he began life in New York as a projector of big industrials, and in all large combinations he had retained Bethune, who was an adept in evading interstate and other laws. Bethune assumed the habits and ways of the simple life. This was his method of appealing to the gallery of public opinion, and his clothes were made to conform to this idea, as he always wore black with a white bow tie. His soft, broad-brimmed black hat gave him the appearance of a Quaker, and it was only when he removed this that you saw the man, for he had a broad, high, furrowed forehead and piercing gray eyes, shaded in black. It being Sunday, he was not long in answering the oil magnate's call.

On seeing him, Playfellow, for he was still very much excited, cried, "I want this fellow Worth bound over to keep the peace! See!" and Playfellow pointed to the papers. "He threatens to kill me, and of course he shot Hodges."

And Bethune, who had wondered greatly why he was wanted, and now understanding, said, "You haven't read

all the papers carefully or you would have found out that Worth did not shoot Hodges."

"That is merely a distinction, as of course he hired a man to do the killing, and I don't want to be assassinated. This brute, Worth, must be tied up by the law," and again Playfellow raised his voice.

Now Bethune smiled and said, "How are we going to do it?"

"Don't you know?"

"I confess I don't see my way clear to tie him up, as you put it."

"Why?"

"There are large reasons in the way — very large ones, indeed."

"Tell me one."

"Yourself."

Playfellow cried angrily, "What do you mean?"

"Look further into the papers of to-day and you will find an account of a big land deal in Utah, and attached to this is your name. I remember distinctly advising you against going into this scheme." Playfellow flushed slowly and, picking up the paper, read, "A Big Steal In Land Engineered By Playfellow." Then he cried, "How could I know that the details would come out? Some one has leaked."

"Oh, I only used that to show by suggestion, as it were, how hard it will be when we ask the court to put Worth under bonds, as of course, we shall be asked a lot of uncomfortable questions. I feel sure you see my point."

Playfellow saw what the lawyer meant, still he was scared and showed it, for this was the first time that any one had turned on him and said plainly, "I will

destroy you." He did not like it, and he hoped to discover a way in the law that he had never before called upon for protection, and was very much annoyed to find that the law might work two ways at one and the same time. Surely the world was in a very bad way when Playfellow thought of calling on the machinery of government, as he had heretofore proved more clearly than any other man how much he despised the law which gave his kind sustenance. Petulantly he turned to Bethune and said, "What shall I do against this scoundrel? I admit he worries me. Can't Mrs. Hodges proceed against him in Jersey?"

"No doubt she could bring a case, but I see that you haven't read your papers carefully yet, especially *The Fad*, whose reporter was in the room after the death roll was called. He states that Worth was seemingly well posted on his father's death, which of course doesn't concern you much, but what will interest you came when Sharp was questioned by Worth. It would seem that Sharp was game up to the time that Worth told him he possessed a diary belonging to a Mr. Pike"—at this name the lawyer smiled at Playfellow, "which told much of that singular individual's life, and of course you missed *The Fad's* other great story of Hodges' confession, which is to be made public to-morrow. I should think," and the lawyer smiled at the fear in Playfellow's face, "that you would do all in your power to keep Mrs. Hodges quiet."

"But suppose," said Playfellow, querulously, "that Worth should begin action against me on this Hodges confession you speak about?"

"Not the slightest danger of that, and I am speaking as sure as a book. You will see by his speech he has a

mighty poor opinion of the law as nowadays administered. Depend upon it, he won't fight that way."

"Can't we get up an agitation against him in Glass Hall and mold public opinion? We have worked that game successfully before."

"You must see his present popularity," laughed the lawyer, "and that if he cared to take the trouble he could muster ten votes to our one, and you know that's what counts. No; if I were you, I should depend entirely on your foreign contracts to break him. You have broken more than a thousand large concerns by actual count, and I think you have him in your clutches now."

Playfellow smiled as his fear for his life vanished for a time, and cried, "I won't have any mercy on him or the others!"

Bethune, seeing what his words had done for his client, added, "And your stock will begin climbing to-morrow, especially if you let me give the press Worth's obligations to Europe."

"Do, do," cried the old man "and threaten a lawsuit on killing a good man like Hodges. A good strong statement, with my many gifts to charity, will make friends, as it has always done."

All over America people were talking of the fire, and those that believed in the ways of peace censured Worth for his speech, which was clearly a public statement, and not just a few words to his workmen. Others, and these were largely in the majority, wondered how Worth would answer the fire. Not by the slow process of law, they felt sure, and they were certain, though his future looked dark, that he would in his own way even things up.

When Monday morning came the public rushed to the newsboys, who were screaming, "The Hodges Confes-

sion," and all read what Hodges had signed, and this made for a great sensation. Even old and staid journals recommended Worth to bring suit for damages against Playfellow. But he was away North, and when seen by a reporter said merely, "Haven't any statement to make."

Other newspaper men tried to interview Tyndale, but Worth's lawyer refused to be seen. But there was plenty of "copy," as Playfellow's threat of proceeding against Worth made a sensation that was not anticipated. Meetings held all over New York, New Jersey, and elsewhere cried as in one voice, "Hodges deserved death, and if Playfellow and his gang of bribers want trouble we will give it to them in large doses."

It was these people in mass that showed Playfellow and Bethune that the public generally were for Worth up to the price of blood. John, now discussed more than any other man in the country, was on the train, going as fast as he could to his mill at Lake Superior.

He had said to Lurgan, "I don't know how extensive their 'fire' order is, and I must, at all hazards, protect the barrel factory. I am taking Tony with me and have requested Catherine not to leave this place while I am away. For her safety I have requested Hadley to turn out of the grounds every stranger that he sees."

Lurgan, who wanted to talk business, said, "How about that oil, John?"

"Oh," John replied, smiling, "trust me a bit longer."

With a tear in his eye, the old man cried, "I trust you always, John, and if you only loved Catherine I should, even in poverty, be the happiest man in America. For you are a man, John, with all that word means."

John was going to say something, but Tyndale, who had been sent for, entered at the moment and John

murmured, "I'll see you before I go." But he had no opportunity for another talk with Lurgan, as Tony came in shortly to say that they had barely time to catch the train.

"I think you have all my wishes; at any rate I'll be always near a long-distance wire," and, hastily writing a note, he said, "Give this to Willie, and he will attend to the financial matters you mention."

At the door Lurgan gave John a paper, whispering, "Read that and you'll understand my meaning more clearly."

John was in a curious mood and his soul was greatly troubled. At the works in Michigan the men found a totally different Worth from the man they had previously known, as now he seemed to possess the spirit of the devil and was hardly ever satisfied with anything or anybody. He was there for several days, and in parting said to Tony:

"Shoot the first stranger you see back of the mill, and don't sleep a wink until all the barrels are shipped. And only leave here with the last lot; do you understand?"

"Perfectly, master."

"And continue to send a man with every train load. I'm going to our own oil property."

When John got into his power-boat, Tony grieved, for only once before had he seen his master with red eyes, and he wondered what was wrong.

"I never saw him so excited before," exclaimed Tony to the foreman. "Some devil spirit is eating into him."

And John's heart was a sea of despair, but, fortunately perhaps, he had plenty of work to do and soon he was on his own oil fields, superintending the filling of the barrels for Europe. When he had arranged things

there, he went to Texas, always consumed by feelings absolutely remote from his work. He had not even heard from Willie, nor did he once think of him, and Willie, for a time, was in desperate straits, and all because he loved John Worth.

CHAPTER XXIII

FORMULA 1506

THE John Worth Bank building was a brick and stone structure four stories high. The upper floors were occupied by John Worth; the third floor was filled with draftsmen, whose duties were to put down definitely and accurately on paper the work which he outlined to them. The fourth floor was used entirely for laboratory work, and here was to be found every known apparatus, every chemical, and every reagent used in scientific research. It was in this room that the liquid to harden copper was made, and it was here that the largely speculative mind of Worth held full sway. Here he realized that there were no boundaries to science, no beaten roads or paths. He always enjoyed his hours in the laboratory, for they seemed to belong to another world and yet were essentially practical. He was following the bent of his business and was trying to solve, through chemistry, that which would help him forward in the great fight for life. And it was here, too, that Harold Tyndale would often come to watch Worth's experiments. John liked Tyndale, liked his cryptic, humorous way of putting things, and they had become friends. One day before the fire they had been talking, and John's determined expression interested the lawyer.

"Why do I look grim, Tyndale, you ask? I have just discovered something that startles me. I hardly dare

believe it myself yet, much less speak of it to another. If my deductions are correct, this age of steel is, indeed, at the mercy of a new factor, the existence of which has never been imagined, not even by writers like Verne. I have discovered a mechano-chemic disease, that, once it has attacked steel or iron in any of their forms, will almost instantly dissipate the inherent strengths of those world-worshiped materials and leave them impotent as the charred semblance of the log which lies in that grate. See! I shall inoculate that old retort. There—watch it now!"

A drop of fluid from the tip of a glass rod fell into the dingy laboratory implement. But nothing seemed to occur. There it stood, black and red and homely.

Tyndale turned to Worth questioningly—"When?"

"Touch it, Tyndale."

Tyndale strode forward and his hand closed upon what still appeared to be the retort, but there was no substance within his grasp. His fingers met, and between them remained only a coating of rust. The iron receptacle had disappeared as a bubble of soap bursts, and where it had stood upon the table there now was only a trace of reddish black powder.

"Paint the steel columns of a sky-scraper to-night," said Worth, "and to-morrow but a ruin of brick and stone will remain, with not an ounce of iron or steel to be found in the entire heap. I tell you, Tyndale, if this disease, this cohesion-destroying germ, should ever lay hold of this city, there would be a catastrophe beyond description, and those who had escaped the ruin would never again build with the black metal we have learnt to call wealth. Let it touch one end of a railway line and ties only would be found on the roadbed. It is a terrible

power of which to be the custodian, so I shall lock formula No. 1506 here in my strong box."

"But I, too, have the combination."

"Yes, Tyndale, but I trust, in event of my death, that you will destroy 1506."

Stirring scenes and his own excessive work in fighting Playfellow soon drove from Tyndale's mind this great discovery of Worth's. But when he was in his office on Monday morning this liquid demonstration came back to him with startling force, and with a bound he was out of his chair, walking up and down the room like a caged animal. His arms were folded and his head was almost buried in his raised shoulders. Halting at last, he took a key from his desk and in a moment was in the laboratory.

Going quickly to John's strong box, he easily found formula 1506; his eyes glistened and a smile played upon his strong, Indian-like features. Putting on his hat, he visited three large chemists, and to each he gave a part of the recipe and learned that he could get five gallons of the liquid in six weeks. Then he went back to his office, full of suppressed excitement.

After attending to his mail and other routine work, he went to Radley's office with a number of letters and said, "The steamship companies will, of course, think now that we will not be able to deliver the oil contracted for, so I have here a notice in writing which I want you to sign. See if my letter states clearly that we hold them to their agreements."

After reading, Willie answered, "They are all right, and I'll sign and enclose first check on account."

"But here is a letter for you which Mr. Worth gave me just as he was leaving."

Breaking the seal, Willie read "Personal," under-

scored, and, "Give Tyndale checks to hold steamers. I'm going to make the delivery of oil as mentioned in our contracts. — John."

After reading John's letter Willie was more mystified than ever, as he wondered how his friend was going to deliver that which was nominated in the bond — deodorized oil. But he did not voice his thoughts, and Tyndale cried, "He is as deep as the Pacific; but listen to me and I think I'll astonish you."

Using a map to illustrate his points, Tyndale talked earnestly, going fully into the details of his project. And when the lawyer had finished, his soul on fire with the greatness of Tyndale's scheme, Willie cried:

"That at any rate is not obscure, and great heavens, how it will surprise them, eh?" Tyndale chuckled and Willie continued, "I like your idea of hitting back and your way of planning ahead, but I like best the liquid's death-like silence. I also think that you will thereby pull us out of a very unpleasant predicament." Again Willie read John's letter, but only to shake his head.

"I'll have everything in perfect readiness. Did you notice Playfellow's wail for help in this morning's papers, and he has only felt the velvet glove so far. When I deliver this weird blow he will realize what he's up against. Up to the present he has held a monopoly on certain lines," and Tyndale, laughing, continued, "I'll wager he is so encrusted with his own infallibility that he doesn't even think that we contemplate injuring him."

"If there's a museum in hell, and there must be such a place to divert its denizens, Playfellow will wallow in slime, always an object of great interest and respect to ordinary scoundrels," remarked Willie, vindictively, and then the door closed on Tyndale.

Radley sat for a time in deep thought, weighing the consequences of the deadly blow which was to be struck at Playfellow. Then calling himself a coward for wavering, and with Tyndale's strong figure in his mind, he turned to his desk and drafted a letter to the manager of the Midland Bank. This read:

"What amount of money will you loan on our steel, printing, and copper works? I attach the statement of earnings of all three. The first two mentioned have, as you will see, made big money. The copper mill has just started, but I draw your attention to the amount that we paid for the property. I also call your earnest attention to the report of our manager who gives the quantity of ore in sight and in the dump, which shows clearly that there is a great future for the property.

"I desire you to consider the matter of a large loan. When you have looked over our securities, I will call and fully explain our needs. Please telephone an appointment."

Willie looked this over carefully, and was about to ring for his typewriter to transcribe it, when a boy came in with a bit of paper folded at the corner, and said, "A lady to see you, sir." Opening the paper, he saw a name that made his heart beat, for on the paper was written, "Polly."

"Show the lady in," he ordered; and going towards the door as it was opened, he cried, "I am very glad to see you, Miss Platt, and how are you, anyway?"

"I am very well, thank you, Willie."

After Miss Platt was seated, she said, "What a nice office, and how large and roomy! I don't suppose you ever do any work, though."

Willie smiled expansively. "Not much — the mahog-

any, the pictures, and the rug are here merely to house me comfortably and pleasantly for a few hours each day."

"That's it, I'm sure." Polly laughed nervously. "At any rate, cousin Neil never does anything but smoke."

In studying his beloved visitor after his first sweeping look, Willie noticed that her gaiety was forced, that her face was very pale, and that she was extremely nervous, and he wondered what was troubling her. As he was very fond of Mrs. Platt, he thought perhaps that she might be ill, and asked, "Every one at home well, Polly?" Looking at him, with eyes humid with love and entreaty, she answered, "Oh, yes, we are all quite well." Then, her mood changing, as she glared angrily at him for not realizing what her presence meant, she burst out, "You are the stupidest man I know."

Willie was amazed and, going up to Polly, said, "I am in the dumps and can't quarrel to-day, so tell me, what it is. I see something is wrong and, well, I'm stupid, I suppose."

Polly noted the deep lines in Willie's face and a hunted look in his eyes, so, changing again, and gazing at him archly from the corner of her eyes, in a bird-like voice she said, "Where is that little book?"

"Oh, that is put away," replied Willie, with a flush.

"But I want to see it," asserted Polly, very firmly.

Going to his desk, Willie, smiling sadly, found the book and gave it to Polly.

"But it is sealed up with stamps," she cried, "and I want to see inside."

"What's the use? Those stamps are its winding sheet."

Polly, stamping her foot, exclaimed, "Please break those seals."

Willie did as requested and gave her the book, which

she opened at the place where there was a marker. But her eyes did not see that which she sought; instead, in one quick glance, she saw the names of Worth, King, Lurgan, and The Duffer. Opposite each name she saw a row of figures; a very large row followed the first three, but a small one was attached to The Duffer.

"This is not the page I want, and who is The Duffer, anyway?"

Willie looked across and saw the page. "I don't know, of course, what you want to find in the book, and —"

"I have it. I have it," cried Polly, flaunting the page at Willie. Look, you have asked me to marry you thirty-three times, Willie!" and now Polly came closer and looked at him in a way that made him almost suffocate with happiness, "make it thirty-four?"

Looking at her desperately, and with a note of real pain in his voice, he cried, "I love you, dear, but I can't ask you to marry me now. I was rich in those days, or, at any rate, on the road to great wealth; now I'm a beggar, or will be soon."

The girl, seeing that she was still loved, said archly, "Oh, Willie, make it thirty-four just for fun. I don't like thirty-three; it's such an unlucky number!" Now driving away his gloom, and playing the game that he had often played before, Willie said, "Polly, let's get married this evening!"

"If you kiss me, I'll consent," answered Polly, putting her hands in his.

Willie could not resist the red lips and rosy face, so he kissed Polly, not once but many times, and then he said contritely, "I should not have done that, Polly; it was unmanly and unfair."

"But, Willie, we are engaged now."

"But that was only play."

"Oh, but it wasn't, unless, of course, you don't love me."

"You know I love you, Polly; still, I am not going to hold you to an engagement."

"Look here, Willie, what is wrong, anyway? You don't seem the least bit natural."

"Polly, to make you understand, I will trust you with a secret. When John made his speech the other night to his workmen, I said that we had plenty of money; but as a matter of fact, we are broke. King has no more money, and Lurgan, who has put in more than any one, has reached his end, and of course all John's money is gone. This is the actual situation. Do you see it?"

"Yes, dear; but tell me, who is The Duffer?"

"I am."

"Why?"

"Because I own a fifth of this bank and consequently of everything else that John has built, and my earnings have been small compared to others, and hence my assistance to carry on the fight has been merely that of a helper. So I call myself The Duffer."

"But if you have no more money, how can you carry on the fight?"

"Read that"; and Willie gave Polly the letter which he intended sending to the manager of the Midland.

"Oh, but they will let you have all you want, Willie, so why bother?"

"I must tell you more before you will understand. We have already drawn a great quantity of money from this bank, and the securities I am going to offer the Midland belong as of right to our depositors. Do you see now, Polly?"

"I see; and you are doing this for Mr. King, Mr. Lurgan, and John?"

"No, dear, I am doing it for John only. By helping him, I of course help the others, but naturally I would not put my soul in shame for Lurgan and King."

"You love John, Willie?"

"Yes, dear."

"Above honor?"

"As you see, above honor."

Polly walked over to Willie and, putting her cheek against his, said, "What a strong man you are! You seem to be another person to-day, and I like your love for Mr. Worth. Does he know of this — this contemplated loan?"

"No, sweet."

"But when he finds out, what then?"

"If we weather the storm he will never know. If we don't — well, take another look in my desk and you'll see that I have thought of that eventuality, too."

Willie's words made Polly feel cold with fear, for she thought she understood his allusion. Still with her face against his, she said, "You would like the money and honor as well?"

"Of course, dear, but why dream?"

"You know that my mother was a Carpenter?"

Not seeing the drift of the remark, Willie answered, "Of course, every one knows that."

"Then we will be married at once, Willie, and she will give you what you want. I'm afraid she is very, very rich."

"That's impossible, dear little heart," cried Willie, flushing.

"I appreciate now why you told me your secret," said

Polly, softly, "but even if you did this act which you think distasteful —"

"Dishonorable is the right word," broke in Willie.

"I should still be willing to marry you, for I seem to have found your strong side this morning. Would it not be better every way if you came with me at once and explained matters to mother? Think before you answer. Come now and there is no ghost to haunt you. I am talking business to you, Willie," and she kissed the white, drawn face of the man, and then added, "I nearly cried my eyes out yesterday after I had read about the fire, and the big frightful headlines of this morning, that the John Worth Bank could not weather the storm and would go broke within the week. Then I saw mention of those contracts with England and read that besides losing the oil you would have to pay millions in penalties. It was like a horrid dream, and then mother, who likes you, said, 'Be nice to him.' I thought and thought, and here I am proposing to you. Do — do come with me, Willie! Think of the John whom you love, the Catherine whom we all love, and come."

"I'll go, dear heart, and tell the story to your mother," cried Willie, reaching for his hat, "you are a rare jewel, Polly. But I'm afraid your mother won't like the idea."

Polly smiled brightly. "Never figure women in your balance sheets, Willie; we are not items."

"You are fascinating, at any rate, and I want just one more."

"Only a tiny one."

Going to the table she picked up the letter to the Midland Bank and tore it up, saying nothing, because she knew after talking with her mother, Willie would

secure from her all the financial aid he needed. The night before she had confessed her love to her mother, who had answered, "Of course, Polly, I always knew you cared for him. At first I did not quite like the idea, but when Mr. Lurgan told me who he was, and of his manliness and cleverness, and as I also saw that my chick," and the good mother patted Polly's bowed head, "was growing fond of his society, I decided that he was a nice boy. Then one day I heard from your lips that he wasn't coming any more, and I felt sorry. Now, dear, listen to me carefully; we want to help Mr. Lurgan and the Worths in their dire extremity, but it's hard to get at them. They belong to the kind who won't ask for personal assistance; and, so, go to your Willie this morning and bring him to me. He is fond of John Worth and has as well a business head on his shoulders, and with these to work on, I see a way to help."

Throwing her arms about her mother, Polly had cried, "You are so good."

"It's justice, child, and I may be also a trifle affected by the strong, sterling personality of Mr. Snowman"; and Polly's mother smiled and added, "That was the name Percy used when I first met him, and when I heard the whole story and then saw his way of life afterwards, I, too, agreed with my son that he belongs to that class of men who make history, and I also see the strong love for humanity that he possesses."

CHAPTER XXIV

“TO-MORROW AT SIX”

BEFORE noon on Tuesday, Willie was in King's office, and after the usual greeting said, “I have just placed a lot of money to your credit at Lurgan's, and —”

“Has it been raining gold?” interrupted King, in a happy voice.

“Yes”; and Willie, in a very joyous mood, looking in fancy with full confidence at John's letter, continued, “I suggest that you buy oil stock — a lot of it, and I'll give you the tip when to sell it. How much has it gone up?”

“Twenty points.”

“I heard you say to John one day that you had brokers who ‘leaked.’” King was now looking directly at Willie, with his strong, piercing eyes. “Buy all the shares you can through your regular brokers first. Then give the leaky ones an order. If possible, tell them your whole order.”

King walked to his ticker and, speaking to the instrument, said in a hushed voice, “Then there is a screw loose in the English and European contracts?”

Willie's homely face expanded into a grin as he answered, “I suspect that there will be several screws tightened when our oil is delivered.”

With this vague statement he vanished and King began buying oil stock. And as there was plenty of it for sale, he had no difficulty getting all he wanted; then he sent for another firm of brokers and gave them an order.

In ten minutes Playfellow knew that King was a heavy buyer of his stock, and in the press the following morning it was stated that the King-Lurgan combination were trying to get control of Oil. This item was given to the papers by Playfellow and made his stock very firm. "I see their little game," asserted Playfellow to Bethune, "and one day soon they will be up here to arrange a settlement."

"Do you suppose," asked Bethune, three weeks later, when Playfellow's stock had gone up to one hundred and fifty, "that they know that you are behind the big European purchases?"

"As they are dealing through a bank and with regular organized companies, I don't see why they should suspect me, though I admit the publicity these orders have received lately may turn their eyes in my direction. But I don't care now what they know or what they suspect."

"Still they show most extraordinary means for men that are supposed to be broke; look at the Meadows, they have a regular beehive of workmen rebuilding. And frankly, Mr. Playfellow, I am amazed at their silence; for if ever a company was implicated in anything, we are that company. I am thinking of the Hodges confession. I can only attribute their inaction to one cause, and that is, that they mean to retaliate in some terrible manner, so I advise you to look out."

"Pooh-pooh," answered Playfellow. "They won't bother me, and how can they hurt me, anyway? I tell you that they are broke — broke."

The astute lawyer said no more, but he was infected with the belief, as was every one else, that John Worth would answer the fire by another of greater magnitude.

The following day the Italian shipment of oil was

started, and the press noted this as if it were a big battle between contending armies. Newspapers all over the country sent special correspondents to Europe to report the opening of the barrels, which was to take place in less than six weeks.

All of Worth's contracts had been given to the public prints, and it was well known that storage and docks had to be provided by the European concerns. Worth had merely to deliver at Genoa harbor for Italy, Hamburg for Germany and Austria, Cherbourg for France, and Liverpool for England. It was noticed, too, that the prices ran from one dollar and a quarter a barrel to three dollars and a quarter. The great difference in price was explained by the fact that in order to meet their agreements the steamship companies had to carry oil on their passenger ships, and hence the extra charge per barrel. Now that the first consignment had gone forward, all were greatly concerned, because it was well known that the shipped oil had never been near a deodorizing mill, and if it had not been refined it must necessarily be crude oil and not as stipulated in the contracts.

Playfellow arranged to send experts to each and every port, in addition to those who were to be on the ground to look after the housing of the oil. So far Tyndale had not engaged any one outside of the official examiners, nor did he intend to, as he was satisfied with the men appointed. He did not hear the great, anxious voice of the multitude, for he was working night and day on his own project, which, judging from the deep smile that played upon his features, must have been moving along satisfactorily.

Two days after the first steamer left New Orleans for Genoa with its load, he called on Willie. "If it is agreeable to you, Radley, I'll begin operations. I have every-

thing in perfect working order. As you know through the Midland Bank, I sent a man to Europe to find out about the companies that we are dealing with, and of course I heard by cable that Playfellow, under cover of Marsh, his London agent, is back of all this. I did not learn anything new, as we suspected all this before; still it was worth finding out positively. But he sent on one bit of information that's important; he learned that the Bank of England has accepted Playfellow's note for a very large amount, with all his pipe lines as part security. Now we can harass Playfellow a good deal by getting busy at once, as immediate action will make the English bank collect its loan now instead of after the oil is delivered. And perhaps we will, as well, pull John out of a hole, for I don't see how he can deliver deodorized oil. This last is the important point. We must pull John out of a hole and put Playfellow in one. What do you say?"

"You have it," cried Willie, jumping up. "Now is the time, of course. But is everything ready — absolutely so?"

And Tyndale, smiling, made answer, "I am more than satisfied with the men I have secured, and I have located one at each of Oil's important centers. I tell you that it is the most gigantic blow ever aimed at any one. I have tried the liquid and it works to perfection, and now, by God, Playfellow pays, and pays hard."

"How you hate him, Mr. Tyndale!"

"Hate him! I can see my little sister's last look before she vanished into the unknown, and by her dead body I swore to be revenged. I was going to shoot, as that is our Western habit, but John Worth said, 'That's nothing; not even a momentary pang. My way is best.' So I followed him and have grown to love him and his

relentless method of warfare. I suppose you have suspected that I killed Hodges. I did that deed and the Oil men know it. I wouldn't have killed him but for Mrs. Worth and little Jo. I foresaw the end of John's speech and realized what he intended doing, so I sent the men at the back of the house away, and they went willingly when I told them why. I hate him and his cursed work!" Tyndale laughed harshly and cried as he was at the door, "To-morrow at six."

When he had gone, Willie thought of his own grievance against Playfellow, and was glad that their retort to the fire was now ready for fulfilment.

When Tyndale reached his own room he pulled out of a drawer a number of telegrams reading, "To-morrow at six p.m." and, taking them to the telegraph office, sent them with a feeling of deep pleasure.

In the meantime Willie called King on the telephone and said, "Before market closes to-morrow, sell every share of oil stock you possess."

"What will it be worth to-morrow at closing?" asked King, curiously.

"Nothing."

There was a pleasant smile on King's face when he proceeded to unload his holdings; then he began to sell short. Willie called on Lurgan and asked if he had any properties that would be affected by Oil's smashing up, and the old man answered that he had not, but wished to know what was in the wind.

"Tyndale and I, in John's absence, have worked up a little event."

"And that is?"

"The destruction of all Playfellow's pipe lines."

"But, Willie, that will take hundreds of men."

"On the contrary, it will only take twenty."

The banker showed his great astonishment, and, with wide-open eyes, cried, "Explain."

"It's perfectly stupendous!" Lurgan gasped after Willie had given him an account of the project.

The old man sat looking out the window for a time, his mind dazed by the magnitude of the scheme. At last, turning about, he said, "Give me a few more details, I can't grasp it. Willie, where does John's power end?"

"I don't know, Governor," answered Radley, solemnly.

"Does he know what Tyndale is doing with this liquid?"

"Not a word. You see, Governor, Playfellow was considerate enough to make my father suffer the slow torture undergone by a man who watches his family starving, so I listened to this scheme, which belongs to Tyndale, with growing affection, if I may put it that way. And the necessary men were ready to his hand, for the burning of our refineries put our people in just the right humor to listen closely to our lawyer. Well, he and Bidding had the twenty men in three days and, as we know all about their pipe lines and pumping stations, it was merely a question of detail, and we are strong on detail in our shop. But it was decided that John should remain in ignorance."

"I see, and I think you are right; and again, he is overworked. We must ship him off somewhere after that damned oil is delivered. By the way, Willie, who is going to pay for that oil, if it is crude?"

"Mrs. Radley."

"Your mother, Willie? I did not know she was rich."

"My wife, Governor."

"Willie, you red-headed imp of Satan — what do you mean?"

"It's still a secret, for business reasons," asserted Willie. "You see, Neil Mannering thought that it would be a pity to let Playfellow know what he was up against."

"Willie, I'll throw this chair at you if you don't begin at the beginning."

"It's Polly, Governor!"

Rushing to Willie, the old man caught his hand and cried, "You are splendid, and I congratulate you a thousand times." Lurgan was brimming over with joy, because he saw what the marriage meant to the John Worth Bank and its schemes, so he went on, "I won't tell a soul, Willie; now give me the details."

"There is so little to tell; but first I want to thank you for telling Mrs. Platt who I am. I fancy you helped me quite a bit, for family means a lot to those people."

Flushing with pleasure, Lurgan said, "Don't bother about that little matter. I couldn't do less than put you 'right' when I saw that you were in love with Polly. Talk business, Willie."

"When I told Mrs. Platt how things stood, she called a meeting of the clan and told them that we intended to be married at once. In solemn conclave it was decided that it would never do to make the wedding public, and we were married privately. Then I was put in full control of Polly's fortune, so now you know where the sinews of war are coming from."

"Then we can pay for that European oil and continue the fight as well. But is that fair to you, Willie?"

"Don't, Governor," Willie cried, with moist eyes. "You, King, and John have always put up without a murmur or a look in my direction, and it's my turn now." After a few seconds of silence, he continued, "I gave Tyndale carte blanche as to men, and as he has a head

for organization, and is impelled by the right motives, you will see a smash that will make our fire look like a two-spot. And there's no fire in our scheme, Governor, and consequently no loss of life."

"It's magnificent, Willie. Does King know?"

"I thought perhaps you would like to tell him."

"Thanks, Willie, I should. To-morrow at six, you say?"

"Yes, Governor, orders have gone out."

Lurgan watched Willie depart, sure now of his bank and of his fortune, for something in the little man's words told him that great success was coming with the morrow. He remembered with joy that Tyndale's blow carried with it no danger to human life, and so King could say, "Yes — yes — and what are you going to do about it, anyway?"

CHAPTER XXV

ASHES TO ASHES

At five o'clock on the fateful evening, Harold Tyndale rode silently out of Jersey City on horseback. An hour later he crossed a low field to a continuous mound which he recognized as the pipe line, and, tethering his horse to a fence, soon had the earth removed from the iron tube that carried Playfellow's oil. Then taking his knife, he carefully scraped the rust and dirt from a small part of the surface. When he had secured a dull shining space an inch square, he uncorked his glass bottle and allowed three drops to fall upon the cleared iron; then corking the bottle carefully, he sat upon the mound to await developments.

It was still light and he watched the bared iron with intense interest. In a few moments the gloss which he had made turned gray, but no further change was apparent, and for a moment his heart stood still and he feared that the liquid had undergone some chemical action. Excited by this thought, he picked up a small stone and threw it at the iron pipe, hitting it a few inches from the point at which he had aimed. And what he saw filled his soul with gladness, for the stone apparently was not stopped at all, but went directly through the pipe, shattering the entire surface which had been uncovered.

The oil immediately began to flow into the field, and Tyndale, jumping on his horse, rode hard for a half mile,

in the direction of the North River. Making another cleared surface, he did as before, only now he rapped the iron easily, immediately after pouring a few drops of the liquid upon it, and it broke at once. Then he poured into the aperture the contents of a small bottle. Doubling back on his route, he saw that the pipe line was leaking in many places, and when he reached the low field it was well covered with oil. Riding hard toward the west, he tapped the line again and then made a long stretch to a pumping station. Going beyond this a half mile, he gave the pipe line an application and, after resting his animal, rode eastward, arriving in New York on one of the early morning boats. Reaching his apartment, he tubbed, breakfasted, and then went to his office.

Sleep was beyond him, as his whole system was held alert with his terrible revenge. The others interested, Lurgan, King, and Radley, had not slept, and very early all were at the bank to hear from Tyndale's own lips his story of the night. And when he had told it, he said, "Now allow your minds to dwell upon this calamity, and also the added disasters to follow, for in less than a week Playfellow will also have on his hands a great many damage suits, since the oil will spread everywhere."

For a time no word was spoken. They were not thinking of the deep-eyed Tyndale and his merciless passion for vengeance, for their minds were turned for the first time to the awful destructive potentiality which John's force germ possessed. They speculated no further than the destroyed pipe lines, however; they were yet to hear of the crumbling pumping stations and iron tanks where Playfellow stored his oil, for the force germ went with the oil and it disintegrated all iron with which it came in contact.

After a few moments of deep silence, King said, "It

will be very interesting to follow what the wise ones have to say, so I hope, merely for my own personal amusement, that none of our men are discovered."

"All the men on this work have been selected with great care by Bidding, who is very clever, and remember, they leave no trail behind, for the overflowing oil will eradicate their first work of removing the earth," answered Tyndale, in a voice that carried conviction. "The effect of to-night's work will be partially lost if the mystery is removed, and I have taken every precaution; at any rate, I feel convinced that my part will not be known nor will our men be discovered in any act, as time and place were chosen to suit each individual. Oh, what a joy it was to chart the routes and select the spots! Of course, I stand ready to confess it as all mine, but I hope that will not be necessary. It is the silent things that hurt, and to-day Playfellow's soul begins its fight with hell, or I am very much mistaken."

Lurgan, liking Tyndale's intention to assume all blame, said, "If it comes out we shall assume responsibility as an institution. What do you say, Jim?"

"That's right," replied King, firmly.

"You can't have all the honor, Tyndale, as the John Worth Bank pays the men you engaged," asserted Willie, with a smile, "and this bank will never abandon its recently adopted motto of 'Taking care of its own.'"

Tyndale, smiling, voiced his thanks and, after a moment, exclaimed, "It's the most wonderful and deadly germ ever discovered, and it is going to stump the scientific people, for of course Playfellow will try to find out what power has destroyed his works. But the liquid will balk investigation, for it leaves no trace other than a substance which looks like ashes. But what I like best

about this blow is its mysterious side, for those who are asked by Playfellow what it is, can only answer by a shake of the head."

"How long will it take the others to do their part," asked King.

"I had each one take up a district which he could cover in six hours, and at this moment each ought to be traveling toward New York."

"Suppose," said Lurgan, looking at King, "that we meet here at four this afternoon." Then addressing Tyndale, "You will have some information by that time?"

"Yes; I shall have heard from all before that."

King and Lurgan walked toward Wall Street; after they had gone some distance in silence, Lurgan exclaimed, "It's magnificent, Jim!"

"I find the manufacturing business extremely interesting and exciting. I thought at one time that Wall Street and racing included everything blood-stirring, but I was wrong, it would seem."

"You see what the force-germ is going to do for us, as, frankly, I did not like the idea of going broke?"

"I see that side too, and of course, I'm rather pleased this morning that I don't have to worry about my funeral expenses."

"But say, Jim, what do you make of John in connection with the European contracts? Look at the water front this minute; it's choked with barrels ready for shipment. I confess I'm at a loss."

"You will remember that I once told you that I did not always understand John," and here King smiled reminiscently, "and I do not pretend to understand him now. But I'll put up my best horse against a dinner that he delivers deodorized oil."

With surprise, Lurgan cried, "But, Jim, how can he?"

"Look at the power of that liquid that Tyndale knew about. How do you or I know but what John possesses another 'something' that can do the work of the mill?"

"That's so," murmured Lurgan, and the old man walked on in silence for a bit. He was thinking deeply; his strong, red face and brown eyes were aglow with the surging thoughts that thronged his subtle brain. Turning to King he said, "I love him — love him as much as I do Catherine."

King, finding Lurgan's hand with his, squeezed it. "We are two lucky old men, for he is neither trickster nor charlatan and he will carry us to honored graves."

"And he doesn't know how to quit; just doesn't know how," Lurgan laughed joyously.

The two men then and there resigned their fate, as they had their wealth, to John Worth. At the corner of the street, where they separated, King said, "They," meaning Oil, "must be getting wise by now?"

"Or foolish!" cried Lurgan.

In the Oil Building, even at this early hour, for it was shortly after nine o'clock, every one was more or less stunned; the manager of their Jersey works had come over to tell his distressing story. At daylight he had been sent for by the night watch, and when he arrived at the works, he found all the machinery in ashes and the yards and roads awash with oil. Going at once to the immense tanks, he saw a round hole in the earth where they had been buried, and in some cases the oil slowly percolating into the ground. Rather dazed he went back to the refinery, only to find that it was all too true — every bit of machinery had dissolved.

He followed the pipe line for a mile or two and found

that it, too, was gone, and then he said to the gaping men who had followed him, "I'll go over to the Oil Building, for they couldn't understand this story if telephoned."

Shortly afterward he was in Playfellow's large office building recounting to a secretary what had happened. The man at first merely smiled, concluding that the manager was off his head from some liquid other than oil. But a call on the telephone from Pittsburg, followed by much the same story, made the secretary more considerate, so that when Playfellow arrived, the manager was at once ushered into the august presence, and again told what he had seen. Almost immediately, telephone messages telling the same story in other words, came in from Syracuse and Boston, and Playfellow felt a great terror taking possession of him, and said to his Jersey manager, "I'll go with you at once and look at this myself, for it's impossible to believe everything you tell me. There must be some mistake."

"I wish, sir, I were dreaming; but it's too true, I assure you."

They departed in a tug for Jersey City. In less than an hour Playfellow saw the destruction, not only of his works, but of the oil tanks and pipe lines, and when these startling facts reached a common center in his brain and diffused a definite thought as to his great property elsewhere, he grew cold and palsied. "Take me back to New York," he cried hoarsely. When he reached his office he found Bethune, Whitehead, and others in his room, all discussing the awful catastrophe. It was now known, by telephone and telegrams, that every tank, pipe line, and pumping station had suffered the same mysterious blight.

When these facts were communicated to Playfellow he

fell weakly into his chair and mopped the perspiration from his brow. In a few minutes he recovered himself and rose. "Who will deliver this fellow Worth to me so that I may kill him?" he hissed. The humor of his question did not strike him, but wily Bethune turned around and smiled at the wall.

Playfellow, becoming more excited, cried, "It was he who did this," and his eyes issued a challenge to those about him, but no one answered; and then he went on, "Bethune, write telegrams at once to all our companies to arrest those pipe breakers and I will sign them." And to the Jersey manager he said, "I have been betrayed. Notwithstanding what the night watchmen say, I believe acid has been poured on all our machinery, and of course their silence has been bought. Now hurry back to the works and arrest our men, and notify the police as well. We must find these miscreants."

The telegrams were sent, and Pentner, the manager, departed; not, however, to swear out warrants against his own men, for he believed their story, as he also believed that other story that was insinuating itself into the souls of many, that John Worth was not altogether human. For had he not met Hiram Bidding the night before at the union on a discussion of wages, and afterwards had not Bidding said in his New England way, "I tell you what, Pentner, he is not of our stuff, no, not of the same material. Now, frankly, we wanted to burn your place, just to show there wasn't any hard feelings, but he didn't cotton to that notion. Said it was old, or something like that, and then he wouldn't talk any more; just smiled pleasantly, but somehow I felt relieved when I saw him smile, and I told the other boys not to worry, for John would fix things a new way, and I calculate he will one

day soon — yes, that's how I sensed it — and it wouldn't surprise me a bit to wake up some morning and find your works gone, and without there being a fire either. Just gone, is how I figure it. I tell you what, he is not altogether of this world. When he wants machinery to do a bit of work, why, he gets it out of his head; but those are little things.

"Look at steel, copper, and oil, the world's greatest products,—all his. Aye, Pentner, if I were you I'd quit Playfellow, for he and all his works are doomed. How do I know? I don't know, but I feel it, as all the others do; we are sure that Playfellow has run his cursed course."

Pentner hurried to Jersey, firm in the belief that, with the aid of some invisible power, Worth had crushed Oil by one staggering blow. Questioning all the night watch only made Bidding's words stand out in greater relief, for the men said in tones that could not be doubted, "No one was here, not a living soul, but ourselves." When Pentner was called on the telephone at one o'clock to give an account of his work since morning, he answered, "I have notified the police and they are investigating. I have not sworn out warrants against our men, because I believe their story; if you find anything wrong in this statement I am willing to quit now."

"Hold the wire," the secretary replied, and going to Playfellow he reported what Pentner had said, and Playfellow, flushing angrily, cried, "Discharge the fellow at once."

Later in the day Pentner went to Bidding and said, "I'm bounced. Can I get connected with Worth, for you know I'm pretty well up on oil and its by-products?"

Bidding, knowing that Pentner would sooner or later

find out about the men sent out by Tyndale, replied, "I will see Radley to-day and, though I can't promise, yet I sort o' think you will be on our pay-rolls to-morrow."

This dismissal of Pentner received the attention of the newspapers with the news of the destruction of Playfellow's Jersey property, for when he was discharged there were many reporters viewing the havoc, and one of them interviewed him. What Bidding had said about John was featured and went the round of the press, and the keynote of this particular story was superstition.

When Lurgan and King arrived at the John Worth Bank at four o'clock the papers did not have the complete story of the wreck; that was to come later. Both of John's partners were anxious to hear the inside facts, and when they were seated in the board room, which was also Willie's office, Tyndale was sent for and at once he began to read his cypher messages. After these were all explained, Lurgan cried, "Do I understand that everything came off without a hitch?"

"No hitch anywhere, and all gone to ashes," replied Tyndale, with a smile. "It's beautiful and very satisfactory. Oh, yes, Mr. Bethune called this afternoon for the amiable purpose of telling me that he was going to bring an action for millions against Worth, and would I, as Worth was absent, accept service. It was wholly undignified and unprofessional, but I had to laugh at him, and I am afraid I annoyed him greatly by looking at his proposed action as a joke."

King, who was afraid of the law, said, "But isn't that serious?"

"Not at all. I showed the clever Bethune very clearly that, by evidence in our possession, we could put Playfellow behind the bars for life. I also intimated that we

could end his own career as a lawyer. Playfellow is just rattled and excited. It is his first knockout blow and he doesn't like it. Of course you know," addressing Mr. King, "that my work has mainly been to follow up the Pike diary, and through it I can prove that Playfellow is the greatest scoundrel that ever lived."

When Bethune had told Playfellow of his talk with Tyndale, the old man protested, "But I always worked for the good of the country, and in doing my appointed tasks, which were always approved by the Almighty, I had to do things that common mortals didn't understand!"

Bethune smarted from the sneer in Tyndale's words, and when he had said, "And you look out, also, Mr. Bethune, as we are powerful enough to have the bar association look into the Utah land deal and how the squatters were sworn or not sworn, whichever you like best." Though very clever, Bethune was a coward and he had made no retort to Tyndale. Now looking at Playfellow he said impressively, "If you insist on an action, you must get some one else."

"I have summoned three experts to meet me here at five," Playfellow replied quietly, "and they are here now. Come and hear what they have to say, and afterwards we can reach a decision."

"Well, gentlemen, what have you made of it?" nervously asked the man of Oil on entering the board-room, where Professors Stevens and Emerson, and Charles Graub, the iron expert, were awaiting him.

"Mystery!" answered Graub. "Every pound of iron is gone from the whole system and nothing left but dirt tunnels where the pipes ran. Tanks, too. Read these telegrams which your secretary gave me."

"Yes, and my private ones are the same! It's awful,

awful! It cannot be nature — or God," he added fearfully. "He wouldn't do that to me. What an unmerited blow! What do you make of it, Professor Stevens?"

"My colleague and I cannot agree, Mr. Playfellow. The specimens of earth that we have been permitted to examine show strong traces of iron salts and a great deal of carbon, but in weight they are far below that of the iron that Professor Emerson believes them to have absorbed. On the other hand, the escaped oil is reddish in color and gives clearly an iron reaction, which confirms me in the theory that some sudden change in the earth's oil pockets has given the oil a corrosive property which, coupled with an appetite for the resulting product, has annihilated your pipe lines."

"Yes — yes; but surely such a change would be universal, and not a single pipe of the Independent Kansas system has been touched. No, it isn't nature; I know it's an enemy."

"But, my dear Mr. Playfellow, there is no known substance, no force within all the range of the knowledge of man, that could be used to work such havoc. My confrère, Professor Stevens, has defined his theory, with which I disagree, but has not fully set forth mine, which I must now hesitate to give, if you are correctly informed regarding the immunity of the Kansas lines."

"Yes, Professor Emerson, my information is correct and, moreover, I have reason to believe that every foot of Independent pipe line in the country has been spared, while every inch of mine is gone. It is terrible — terrible! There is but one who would adopt such a desperate revenge. Worth would, had he the power!"

"But, Mr. Playfellow," cried Graub, "he is a strange man and master of many secrets. We, of the steel busi-

ness have found that out. Watch him. I say he is the very devil in handling metals."

"This is all very well, gentlemen, but you haven't told me how I am to get my pipe lines back, nor how I am to save the ocean of oil that has flooded the country. As a matter of fact, not a single scientist consulted this day has been able to suggest anything of the slightest value to me. Good day, gentlemen. By the way, when you go out, please say that I grieve deeply for the poor who must suffer because of the forced closing of our works. The public will now see to what length unscrupulous business methods are carried against our company."

When they had departed, Bethune said, "You see how futile it would be to begin a lawsuit, and if my opinion is worth anything, I urge strongly that you abandon that idea."

But Playfellow only shook his head, as he still felt that some one would be captured who could bring home the destruction of his property to John Worth, and he remained at his office until late, hoping to receive word from some one of his numerous subsidiary companies that they had discovered a pipe wrecker. But the hours wore on, bringing nothing but the tale of disaster, told even more definitely.

The following morning the newspapers had the complete story of the dissolution, and the public marveled as it read, for beyond the bare story of the utter annihilation, nothing was known. Many journals contained interviews with scientific men, but out of the ocean of words nothing was gained, for nothing definite was placed alongside of the word destruction made reality. And now the people read what Pentner had said, and the name

of John Worth was in every paper and each wrote in its own way of his wonderful attainments. They all knew, however, that Worth was in Texas, busy shipping oil to Europe, and apparently had no more to do with the wiping out of Playfellow's property than any man in the Street. Surely it was a strange and appalling situation, and perhaps it was little wonder that the people were disturbed. Every element of mystery seemed to exist in the situation, as every one appeared satisfied that some means beyond the ordinary had been employed.

By evening, a discussion such as had never been known before was precipitated; it revolved in small circles at first, and afterwards extended until it embraced the nation, and out of it rose the name of Worth, endued with unknown powers. The gist of it was, "He has suffered through these people; they robbed him of father, mother, and uncle, and then they burnt his mills and his people. He is now retaliating, and on the morrow of some day, he will reach out for others that kill and bribe, for did he not promise such reward?"

As well as their awe for his infallibility, for that is the word which was used in connection with his name, men gave him their esteem for his character, because, without the ability to bring it about, they had always looked forward to the cleanliness which he was now introducing into the business world.

During this period, so short in hours, Playfellow learned that his little brief authority had passed and gone. No more sanctimonious appeal to and verbose patronage of God would be tolerated, while he was starving thousands and ruining countless industries. The great Money-King of America had been deposed. He had been made to realize how weakly human he was when brought face to

face with powers beyond his ken, and this feeling was even more strongly forced home to him by a cable from Marsh, which read, "Bank served notice to-day would foreclose in three days if notes were not paid."

On receipt of this cablegram, Playfellow saw a number of bank managers, but they all refused to aid him with a loan now that his pipe lines were destroyed. It was a situation that was indeed desperate. To Bethune he said, "We must raise the money somehow, as we can pay it all back in ten days when Worth's oil is opened." Bethune answered that he would try, but his efforts were unavailing.

Two of the three days had passed when Willie heard of Playfellow's attempt to provide funds to meet the note. He jumped into a cab and in a few moments was closeted with Neil Mannering, who finally said, "It's a bet on John's ability on your part, as of course the Midland doesn't stand to lose anything. I'll tell Low to buy the notes through the Island Bank. But are you right?"

"Absolutely. Listen. John shipped east a lot of that cleansing water for no other purpose than to wash the new barrels he bought on the outside. Now," and here Willie read again John's letter which had come through Tyndale, "he undoubtedly has a way of painting, if I may so express it, each barrel, and this paint deodorizes the oil. He is altogether too clever a man not to say beaten, if he were beaten. He wouldn't mislead us and so I am positively certain that he will deliver that which the contracts call for, and I want those notes so as to drive Playfellow to the wall. I haven't forgotten what he did to my father and John, and I also want all the property that the notes cover, for Playfellow has put up everything he owns both here and in Europe."

"All right, Willie, go ahead; I'll telephone Low to attend to the details, and the notes ought to be in our possession within an hour or two."

Strangely elated, Willie went back to his bank and told Tyndale what he had done, and then he said, "Will you go to Europe?"

"No, Radley, my work is about through, and this is only a large detail matter anyway. Send Nichols; he is young, clever, and a hard worker."

"All right, post him in his duties; but say, what do you think of it?"

"It's great, and I'll watch with pleasure how you pound him, for I'm sure, after the force-germ episode, that John knows his business and that he will deliver to my friend, Mr. Playfellow, the oil that he wanted so badly." Tyndale laughed harshly and then added, "With those notes he gets it from all sides. It's a lovely business situation, full of human possibilities, and I think, Radley, that you're good at driving."

CHAPTER XXVI

CUPS OF GOLD

TUESDAY Lurgan received a telegram from John dated Galveston, which made it necessary for him to do considerable hustling to comply with its orders. The message read, "The Eddy broken down; secure Cunarder. Also see Cassman about running barrels from South — passenger time." Knowing how important the matter was, Lurgan went to the cable office and arranged to connect with the Cunard Company in Liverpool through their New York agents. Then going to Orchid Brothers, the representative of the Cunard Company, he told them what he had done and what he wanted.

In answer, the senior member of the firm exclaimed, "But that's our new turbine vessel, the greyhound of the seas."

"That's why I want her, and I'll pay you any price you ask."

"Of course, Mr. Lurgan, we are hauling a great deal of that oil and, like every one else, we are excited as to the opening of the barrels, so I will do what I can for you. How long will it take the cable people to arrange their connections?"

"They said twenty minutes."

"You are certainly in a hurry," answered Orchid, smiling.

Two hours later Lurgan had secured the Turbina, and

then he called up Cassman and put the matter before him.

"I am anxious to place our road right in Worth's eyes," replied Cassman, "and you may depend on me to have that oil on our North River docks by Saturday evening. I suggest that you place the Turbina in one of our slips, to facilitate loading. I'll have the first train here by day after to-morrow, and then they will arrive every hour until the oil is all in New York. How is that?"

"Splendid — splendid."

"Have your oil men ready to load the vessel and she will get off in plenty of time to make your contract good."

Lurgan telegraphed John what he had accomplished, and was in great good humor when he saw Willie, and to him he said with lively satisfaction, "It takes the old men to do things, after all."

"Right you are, Governor," replied Willie, smiling fondly at the banker.

On Saturday there was great excitement about the docks, and every one was watching the loading of the giant Turbina, whose captain had told John not to rush as he could make Liverpool in less than five days. And when the vessel backed out into North River and started majestically on her course, she was wished success by a great cheer and by the whistle of every boat in the harbor.

At the end of the dock, John saw the vessel disappear and then strode toward the train shed. He had arrived in the city with the last load of oil, and was met by Willie, who, after seeing him, had very little to say. John's appearance recalled to him his friend's look when they had met at The Frenchman, where Tony was told to clean the East side of Playfellow's sleuths.

Suspecting that John was worried about European oil, Willie said, "I have plenty of money at hand, old chap; so don't let the thing trouble you."

Passing his hand over his brow, John smiled sadly and answered, "Oh, the oil is deodorized all right, Willie."

Then, after shaking hands with Lurgan and King, he hurried to the Newark local, and still Willie was at a loss to explain the trouble. He was very glad to hear definitely that the oil would meet the requirements, but he was bothered about John. He spoke of it to Lurgan and King, but they could give no explanation.

When John neared his home, he saw Catherine and Jo coming to meet him, and was overcome with a feeling of abject shame at meeting his wife. Catherine, who had not heard from her husband for two weeks, had wondered at his failure to write, but had attributed his silence to constant work. The papers had reported him as toiling night and day. Now, as she saw him, her heart was struck with fear, for his eyes looked at her with a strange, wild stare.

When they were alone in her bedchamber, he remarked, with great restraint, "I'm afraid I haven't always been kind to you, Catherine, and I'm very sorry."

"But, John, you have been kindness itself! What is wrong?"

"I married you, dear, to hurt your father," he answered, "and it only came home to me a few days ago how cowardly I was. For you don't fashion well with the word 'revenge,' and see what I have done for you."

Taking a slip of paper from his pocket he read to her a paragraph, stating that John Worth had taken Miss Lurgan to a hotel, where they had remained together for the two days before Dr. Sawyer married them.

Seeing the look of blank hopelessness on her husband's face, Catherine cried, "John — John! Dr. Sawyer nailed that lie in a sermon wherein he set forth the truth. I heard from Polly that the story was started by the Play-fellows. Believe me, that wicked story is dead and it did not hurt me anyway." Still seeing his misery, she went on, "Dr. Sawyer told me the day before we were married that you didn't love me; in fact, he hinted about the revenge of which you speak. But I loved you, John, and I knew you loved me, so that began and ended the matter for me."

John shook his head and cried, "Catherine, you are a noble girl, but your words humiliate me, as I did marry you for revenge. And lately, when your father spoke to me about my not loving you, my reply was cut short on account of Tyndale's coming into the room. Then I received that paper and my life has been a hell ever since. For the lie brought home to me how basely I had treated you."

"But you gave me my honor, John."

"That has nothing to do with it."

"But it has! Don't you see that making me holy was hardly an act to put beside revenge? What is it, John? You haven't yet laid bare your heart, or what's troubling you?"

With knitted brow Catherine looked at her husband, trying to pierce his soul, for she laid no weight upon the revenge idea. Long ago she had settled that, and her confidence had never since been betrayed or alarmed by a suspicious thought, and yet here was the man of her soul looking at her hungrily. Her thoughts went back to the day of her wedding, and quickly spanned the years, but she could see no shadow or act that would help her

toward a solution; all was clear as a bright summer's day. John had worked too hard, perhaps; was it that? But no, there was the stalwart form, robust and strong, obviously waiting for condemnation. The burning thought in Catherine's brain was, "How can I bring him rest from this nightmare — this weird ghost that is tormenting him?"

John broke into her thoughts by saying, "Come, Catherine, give me straight words, for you well know that I haven't been honest with you. Dr. Sawyer did not tell you all. Haven't you wondered why he has never come to our house? Listen. He told me that he would never take me by the hand if I insisted upon marrying you for revenge, and I could not gainsay his words nor did I hesitate in marrying. Come, come, Catherine, you know I acted the part of a coward."

As he spoke, a ray of light came to Catherine, and she answered:

"Let us go back. You know when you kissed your 'picture,' John, and then you kissed me again, and I realized that you were lord of my soul, and that," and Catherine's face took on a rosier hue, "I was life of your life to you. I realized by many, so many of your acts, that I was your ideal of womanhood. Many times at night when you thought I was asleep you have kissed your 'picture,' and your shoulder has always been my pillow. Often you have drawn me to you with those strong arms of yours, and my heart has overflowed with great joy. I have said, 'God is good to give me so much love.' Then came the big business enterprises, and at night you would tell me of your hopes, and in your hopes I read your love for others — for those who worked hard for their living wage — and I would say, 'God is good to

give me such a man.' Then came the steel suit, and afterwards, when father relented, and you, keeping my wish ever before you, drew him back to the road of strong men, I cried, 'God is indeed good to me.' Then came the little amber-colored pool and our promise to keep its secret for Jo, that he might use it as a lever for those who could not struggle themselves, and again I said, 'God is good.'

"Beyond all things I prize our walks in the great woods by the little pool, for there you would carry me over the rough spots, and at night, when I rested beside you in the grim silence, I could fully grasp the beauty of your love. To please you I went into society, and liked it only because you found in my dresses so many pictures to wonder at lovingly. And always, always, I said, 'God is good to give me so much love.'"

Looking at the loved face, Catherine saw the eyes become clear and the hopeless expression give way to one of wonder, and she realized that she was opening her way through John's brain to his heart, and she continued, "And when Jo came, I was the very happiest woman in the world, as I have been since and always will be. You are so true, John, and your love is so strong! To me you are the symbol of love, as to your men you are the symbol of hope.

"When I thought of what good old Dr. Sawyer said, I smiled because in my heart there was another, yours, and in yours I see mine," and Catherine, twining her arms about John's neck, and gazing into his soul, cried, "You owe the doctor an apology for telling a story, for you loved me then, John, as madly as I loved you." Her lips touched his and she whispered, "You know it now, don't you?"

And he crushed her to him, saying, "That's it; I love

you so madly, Catherine, that I was afraid, from what your father said, that —”

“That I had complained, not by words, but by little things, eh?”

“God is good to me, too, dear,” he exclaimed, kissing her again and again.

“John, I have often been amused at father’s watching your every act at home. He does not know, dear, how reserved you are before others, and I could not lay bare to him that your treatment of me —” and Catherine stopped and thought for a moment, till, with his eyes on hers, she continued, “was so holy that I still think of myself as a virgin.”

“You are one, my love.”

“It is that which makes life so beautiful.”

And John pressed his wife to him and said, “You are a wonderful flower, and it’s new life to my soul that you won’t see the ugly mind that tried to warp a heart that has always loved you. I suppose I thought too much of my wrongs, but that is all past now. That is, the disease of the mind has passed, for it only dawned on my thinking brain on my last trip how precious you were to me, and that in you I possessed the magic of the world. I shall drop in on Dr. Sawyer to-morrow,” laughed John, “and, after confession, I’ll ask him to dinner.”

Later, when they went downstairs to find Jo and his grandfather, to satisfy the old man, John picked his wife up and kissed her lovingly. Lurgan started and an astonished smile broke over his face. Catherine, blushing, went to her father and whispered, “He has loved me always, father.”

Later, after explaining the circumstances, Lurgan said to King, “I am an old fool.”

"He is a quaint kind of devil, and she is wholly lovable," answered King.

When John reached his office the next day, Willie saw again the man he knew and loved, and John's happy blue eyes made him say, "What was wrong with you yesterday?"

"Sleeplessness, I suppose. At any rate, it was good to get home; but say, Willie, what is this I hear about you and Polly?"

After that story was told they began to talk business, and it was planned that Independent refineries were to be established in nine of the large cities of America, and six in Europe. As he departed, John said, "When you have the figures ready, call a meeting and we will talk this matter over with Lurgan and King."

Tyndale was entering the building as John went out. And he afterwards confessed to Willie that he was horribly afraid until John said pleasantly, "It came up to your expectations, perhaps?"

"Realized every wish!" responded Tyndale, gaily.

When barrel day came around, Playfellow was in his office, and with him were his numerous retainers. All were anxious over the outcome, though each was bolstering up his courage with words. The belief of the man on the street, that John Worth was delivering deodorized oil, had somehow permeated the brain of each and would not be gainsaid. And soon the cables began to deliver their messages, and all told of deodorized oil as per contract. They varied only in wording and, with the last one, Playfellow knew that he was broken. But the worst blow came the following morning in a letter from the John Worth Bank, which stated that they held his note and that if it were not paid in three days they would

foreclose. After a sleepless, haunted night, this seemed to break Playfellow absolutely. His frame shook with weak sobs and he fell in a shuddering heap.

The next day he had revived sufficiently to accost Lurgan on the street and whine, "You must provide for me; I have not a penny. God will bless you."

Lurgan flushed with anger at being stopped, but a note in Playfellow's voice held the angry words that rose to his lips, and he said instead, "Write the John Worth Bank," and then strode on.

At the meeting, which was held to decide as to their future policy, after explaining about the Independents, John said, "These will be supplied with our deodorized oil, which is now at its old price of two dollars a barrel to the public, but the important point is that with the establishment of these Independents our income will never go beyond a certain fixed amount. You see, then, that my plan doesn't mean great riches for us, such as Playfellow possessed at one time. Now what do you say?"

The others were in accord with John's scheme and frankly expressed their approval of it. The speaker, turning to Tyndale said, "I ask again if you will manage our oil for the Northwest?"

"I appreciate your kindness, Mr. Worth, but as I told you before, I'm going back to law."

"Is there anything else?" asked John.

Willie, handing John a paper, with a peculiar emphasis said, "Only this."

After looking at the paper, John read it aloud. It was the Playfellow application for help. And Lurgan, who was watching his son-in-law closely, saw a subtle hardening change take place in his features. King,

who knew John better than Lurgan, noted the iron set of the body and, rising from his chair, walked towards the window. All smiled, for there was no ticker in the John Worth Bank, and when the old man appreciated the force of his habit, he returned to his chair smiling too, and in his velvety voice declared:

"All these works are yours, John, I am merely an attachment, so I will vote with you on Playfellow's appeal."

John looked at Lurgan, who, moved resistlessly by the appeal in John's eyes, said, "I'll join in."

"My father called on Playfellow, and then wrote him from this very street asking for help. And a secretary curtly replied that his application was filed." And then looking at John, Willie said, in a hard, snarling voice, "I vote against giving him any help."

"I promised to destroy this man Playfellow," said John, "and of course I mean to keep my word. I should have killed him long since, but that way is meaningless. I shall now see that he is made to understand what starvation means, and he will also find the narrow boundaries attached to a lost soul. I suspect he would like it if we arrested him for murder, as in the four walls of jail he would be free from the jeers of the people. But I purpose seeing that he walks on the street where he will find the life that he has given to many." Then John wrote across the application, "Refused," and handing the paper to Willie, said, "I think you ought to mail this back to him together with the reply to your father's letter asking for help."

Later that day, in a Pullman car, Tyndale drew from his pocket a photograph of his sister and, looking at the dear features, said, "At last I am satisfied."

After the old men left the bank they walked toward North River on their way to Catherine, and Lurgan said, "He is hard, Jim."

"He is just, you mean," corrected King. "See what his action means to the other bribers. Look again at John Worth as a principle. I tell you what, Jo, I like his way of destroying the Red Prince of Bribery, as I like his way of giving the wage-earners a chance. Again I say, he is merely just and logical."

Lurgan, who had put forward his observation merely to draw out King, said happily, "At any rate I love him, and yes, he has brought business to straight paths. And say, it's going to be great fun showing him Europe! We are to be away for a whole year, and you and Willie will have to run things."

"Nowadays I find business very interesting, and engaging."

A few days later King bade the Worths and Lurgan good-by and with Willie walked to the bank. As they entered the board-room he asked, "What do we do?"

"Until John returns let us mark time, and just keep things moving. He is my inspiration."

And the old man, flicking the ash from his cigar, said quietly, "And mine."

* * * * *

A pedestrian slowly mounted a foot-hill in Southern California, and turning an angle of the road, his eyes were held by a beautiful valley dotted with great trees, and below him he heard the murmur of a brook. Resting a moment on a mossy bank to grasp the full beauty of the scene, he noted a house painted white, with green shutters and a deep veranda. As he looked more carefully he saw children playing. "How beautiful!" he

exclaimed aloud. "And there should be hospitality, too, where nature and man live in such an exquisite setting."

On coming nearer to the house he was amazed to see a number of small fields filled with California "poppies." Here was a veritable field of the cloth of gold, glimmering and glinting in the breeze. In one of these patches of "harmless gold" he saw, busily engaged, a tall, stooped man with a beatific look upon his face. Thinking that he was the owner, the stranger said, "May I rest and eat in your house?"

The gardener, whose face now seemed strangely vacant, loudly cried, "See my acres of gold! gold!" but the laugh which accompanied this accorded illy with the outlook of the old man.

With pity in his heart, the stranger went on to the house, and in answer to his summons a kind-looking woman came to the door and said, "Come in and rest; this is a 'Home' for a tired soul, and all are welcome."

The stranger, looking back at the man in the field, said, "Is that the tired soul? And what glorious flowers!"

"Yes."

"Ah, all should be happy here."

"Oh, he is not of this world, and always, always grows his gold, the escholtzias, or poppies, make his day a joyous one. You know the Spaniards named them, 'cupos de oro,' which means, cups of gold. They are that to him."

"May I ask his name?"

"I do not know it."

"How beautiful this place is, yet the toiler makes me sad; and doesn't he know his name?"

And the woman, again smiling pleasantly, replied,
“No.”

When the stranger was leaving, he said to his hostess,
“And who keeps him so beautifully housed?”

“I once heard at the bank in Los Angeles that Mrs.
Worth, Lurgan’s daughter, pays all our bills.”

THE END







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